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1901—1918

BY

WALTER DE LA MARE

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II

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NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1920

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SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

TO JILL

NOTICE
Please do not write in this
book or turn down the pages

SLEEPYHEAD

AS I lay awake in the white moonlight,
I heard a faint singing in the wood,
"Out of bed,
Sleepyhead,
Put your white foot, now;
Here are we
Beneath the tree
Singing round the root now."

I looked out of window, in the white moonlight,
The leaves were like snow in the wood —
"Come away,
Child, and play
Light with the gnomies;
In a mound,
Green and round,
That's where their home is."

"Honey sweet,
Curds to eat,
Cream and frumenty,
Shells and beads,
Poppy seeds,
You shall have plenty."

But, as soon as I stooped in the dim moonlight
To put on my stocking and my shoe,
The sweet shrill singing echoed faintly away,
And the grey of the morning peeped through,
And instead of the gnomies there came a red robin
To sing of the buttercups and dew.

BLUEBELLS

WHERE the bluebells and the wind are,
Fairies in a ring I spied,
And I heard a little linnet
Singing near beside.

Where the primrose and the dew are —
Soon were sped the fairies all:
Only now the green turf freshens,
And the linnets call.

LOVELOCKS

I WATCHED the Lady Caroline
Bind up her dark and beauteous hair;
Her face was rosy in the glass,
And 'twixt the coils her hands would pass,
White in the candleshine.

Her bottles on the table lay,
Stoppered, yet sweet of violet;
Her image in the mirror stooped
To view those locks as lightly looped
As cherry boughs in May.

The snowy night lay dim without,
I heard the Waits their sweet song sing;
The window smouldered keen with frost;
Yet still she twisted, sleeked and tossed
Her beauteous hair about.

TARTARY

IF I were Lord of Tartary,
Myself and me alone,
My bed should be of ivory,
Of beaten gold my throne;
And in my court would peacocks flaunt,
And in my forests tigers haunt,
And in my pools great fishes slant
Their fins athwart the sun.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
Trumpeters every day
To every meal should summon me,
And in my courtyard bray;
And in the evening lamps would shine,
Yellow as honey, red as wine,
While harp, and flute, and mandoline,
Made music sweet and gay.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
I'd wear a robe of beads,
White, and gold, and green they'd be —
And clustered thick as seeds;
And ere should wane the morning-star,
I'd don my robe and scimitar,

And zebras seven should draw my car
  Through Tartary's dark glades.

Lord of the fruits of Tartary,
  Her rivers silver-pale!
Lord of the hills of Tartary,
  Glen, thicket, wood, and dale!
Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,
Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas,
Her bird-delighting citron-trees
  In every purple vale!

THE BUCKLE

I HAD a silver buckle,
I sewed it on my shoe,
And 'neath a sprig of mistletoe
I danced the evening through.

I had a bunch of cowslips,
I hid them in a grot,
In case the elves should come by night
And me remember not.

I had a yellow riband,
I tied it in my hair,
That, walking in the garden,
The birds might see it there.

I had a secret laughter,
I laughed it near the wall:
Only the ivy and the wind
May tell of it at all.

THE HARE

IN the black furrow of a field
I saw an old witch-hare this night;
And she cocked a lissome ear,
And she eyed the moon so bright,
And she nibbled of the green;
And I whispered "Wh-s-st! witch-hare,"
Away like a ghostie o'er the field
She fled, and left the moonlight there.

BUNCHES OF GRAPES

"BUNCHES of grapes," says Timothy;
"Pomegranates pink," says Elaine;
"A junket of cream and a cranberry tart
For me," says Jane.

"Love-in-a-mist," says Timothy;
"Primroses pale," says Elaine;
"A nosegay of pinks and mignonette
For me," says Jane.

"Chariots of gold," says Timothy;
"Silvery wings," says Elaine;
"A bumpity ride in a waggon of hay
For me," says Jane.

JOHN MOULDY

I SPIED John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone;
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.

He read no book, he snuffed no candle;
The rats ran in, the rats ran out;
And far and near, the drip of water
Went whispering about.

The dusk was still, with dew a-falling,
I saw the Dog Star bleak and grim,
I saw a slim brown rat of Norway
Creep over him.

I spied John Mouldy in his cellar,
Deep down twenty steps of stone;
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,
Smiling there alone.

THE FLY

HOW large unto the tiny fly
Must little things appear! —
A rosebud like a feather bed,
Its prickle like a spear;

A dewdrop like a looking-glass,
A hair like golden wire;
The smallest grain of mustard-seed
As fierce as coals of fire;

A loaf of bread, a lofty hill;
A wasp, a cruel leopard;
And specks of salt as bright to see
As lambkins to a shepherd.

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SONG

O FOR a moon to light me home!
O for a lanthorn green!
For those sweet stars the Pleiades,
That glitter in the darkling trees;
O for a lovelorn taper! O
For a lanthorn green!

O for a frock of tartan!
O for clear, wild grey eyes!
For fingers light as violets,
'Neath branches that the blackbird frets;
O for a thistly meadow! O
For clear, wild grey eyes!

O for a heart like almond boughs!
O for sweet thoughts like rain!
O for first-love like fields of grey
Shut April-buds at break of day!
O for a sleep like music!
Dreams still as rain!

I SAW THREE WITCHES

I SAW three witches
That bowed down like barley,
And straddled their brooms 'neath a louring sky,
And, mounting a storm-cloud,
Aloft on its margin,
Stood black in the silver as up they did fly.

I saw three witches
That mocked the poor sparrows
They carried in cages of wicker along,
Till a hawk from his eyrie
Swooped down like an arrow,
Smote on the cages, and ended their song.

I saw three witches
That sailed in a shallop,
All turning their heads with a snickering smile,
Till a bank of green osiers
Concealed their grim faces,
Though I heard them lamenting for many a mile.

I saw three witches
Asleep in a valley,

Their heads in a row, like stones in a flood,
Till the moon, creeping upward,
Looked white through the valley,
And turned them to bushes in bright scarlet bud.

THE SILVER PENNY

"SAILORMAN, I'll give to you
My bright silver penny,
If out to sea you'll sail me
And my dear sister Jenny."

"Get in, young sir, I'll sail ye
And your dear sister Jenny,
But pay she shall her golden locks
Instead of your penny."

They sail away, they sail away,
O fierce the winds blew!
The foam flew in clouds,
And dark the night grew!

And all the wild sea-water
Climbed steep into the boat;
Back to the shore again
Sail they will not.

Drowned is the sailorman,
Drowned is sweet Jenny,
And drowned in the deep sea
A bright silver penny.

THE RAINBOW

I SAW the lovely arch
  Of Rainbow span the sky,
The gold sun burning
  As the rain swept by.

In bright-ringed solitude
  The showery foliage shone
One lovely moment,
  And the Bow was gone.

THE FAIRIES DANCING

I HEARD along the early hills,
  Ere yet the lark was risen up,
Ere yet the dawn with firelight fills
  The night-dew of the bramble-cup,—
I heard the fairies in a ring
  Sing as they tripped a lilting round
Soft as the moon on wavering wing.
  The starlight shook as if with sound,
As if with echoing, and the stars
  Prankt their bright eyes with trembling gleams;
While red with war the gusty Mars
  Rained upon earth his ruddy beams.
He shone alone, low down the West,
  While I, behind a hawthorn-bush,
Watched on the fairies flaxen-tressed
  The fires of the morning flush.
Till, as a mist, their beauty died,
  Their singing shrill and fainter grew;
And daylight tremulous and wide
  Flooded the moorland through and through;
Till Urdon's copper weathercock
  Was reared in golden flame afar,
And dim from moonlit dreams awoke
  The towers and groves of Arroar.

REVERIE

WHEN slim Sophia mounts her horse
And paces down the avenue,
It seems an inward melody
She paces to.

Each narrow hoof is lifted high
Beneath the dark enclustering pines,
A silver ray within his bit
And bridle shines.

His eye burns deep, his tail is arched,
And streams upon the shadowy air,
The daylight sleeks his jetty flanks,
His mistress' hair.

Her habit flows in darkness down,
Upon the stirrup rests her foot,
Her brow is lifted, as if earth
She heeded not.

'Tis silent in the avenue,
The sombre pines are mute of song,
The blue is dark, there moves no breeze
The boughs among.

When slim Sophia mounts her horse
  And paces down the avenue,
It seems an inward melody
      She paces to.

THE THREE BEGGARS

'TWAS autumn daybreak gold and wild,
  While past St. Ann's grey tower they shuffled,
Three beggars spied a fairy-child
    In crimson mantle muffled.

The daybreak lighted up her face
  All pink, and sharp, and emerald-eyed;
She looked on them a little space,
    And shrill as hautboy cried: —

" O three tall footsore men of rags
  Which walking this gold morn I see,
What will ye give me from your bags
    For fairy kisses three? "

The first, that was a reddish man,
  Out of his bundle takes a crust:
" La, by the tombstones of St. Ann,
    There's fee, if fee ye must! "

The second, that was a chestnut man,
  Out of his bundle draws a bone:
" Lo, by the belfry of St. Ann,
    And all my breakfast gone! "

The third, that was a yellow man,
  Out of his bundle picks a groat,
"La, by the Angel of St. Ann,
    And I must go without."

That changeling, lean and icy-lipped,
  Touched crust, and bone, and groat, and lo!
Beneath her finger taper-tipped
    The magic all ran through.

Instead of crust a peacock pie,
  Instead of bone sweet venison,
Instead of groat a white lily
    With seven blooms thereon.

And each fair cup was deep with wine:
  Such was the changeling's charity,
The sweet feast was enough for nine,
    But not too much for three.

O toothsome meat in jelly froze!
  O tender haunch of elfin stag!
O rich the odour that arose!
    O plump with scraps each bag!

There, in the daybreak gold and wild,
  Each merry-hearted beggar man
Drank deep unto the fairy child,
    And blessed the good St. Ann.

THE DWARF

"NOW, Jinnie, my dear, to the dwarf be off,
That lives in Barberry Wood,
And fetch me some honey, but be sure you don't
laugh,—
He hates little girls that are rude, are rude,
He hates little girls that are rude."

Jane tapped at the door of the house in the wood,
And the dwarf looked over the wall,
He eyed her so queer, 'twas as much as she could
To keep from laughing at all, at all,
To keep from laughing at all.

His shoes down the passage came clod, clod, clod,
And when he opened the door,
He croaked so harsh, 'twas as much as she could
To keep from laughing the more, the more,
To keep from laughing the more.

As there, with his bushy red beard, he stood,
Pricked out to double its size,
He squinted so cross, 'twas as much as she could
To keep the tears out of her eyes, her eyes,
To keep the tears out of her eyes.

He slammed the door, and went clod, clod, clod,
But while in the porch she bides,
He squealed so fierce, 'twas as much as she could
To keep from cracking her sides, her sides,
To keep from cracking her sides.

He threw a pumpkin over the wall,
And melons and apples beside,
So thick in the air that to see them all fall,
She laughed, and laughed, till she cried, cried,
cried;
Jane laughed and laughed till she cried.

Down fell her teardrops a pit-apat-pat,
And red as a rose she grew; —
"Kah! kah," said the dwarf, "is it crying you're
at?
It's the very worst thing you could do, do, do,
It's the very worst thing you could do."

He slipped like a monkey up into a tree,
He shook her down cherries like rain;
"See now," says he, cheeping, "a blackbird I be,
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again — gain — gain,
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again."

Ah me! what a strange, what a gladsome duet
From a house in the deeps of a wood!
Such shrill and such harsh voices never met yet

A-laughing as loud as they could, could, could,
A-laughing as loud as they could.

Come Jinnie, come dwarf, cocksparrow, and bee,
There's a ring gaudy-green in the dell,
Sing, sing, ye sweet cherubs, that flit in the tree;
La! who can draw tears from a well, well, well,
Who ever drew tears from a well!

ALULVAN

THE sun is clear of bird and cloud,
The grass shines windless, grey and still,
In dusky ruin the owl dreams on,
The cuckoo echoes on the hill;
Yet soft along Alulvan's walks
The ghost at noonday stalks.

His eyes in shadow of his hat
Stare on the ruins of his house;
His cloak, up-fastened with a brooch,
Of faded velvet grey as mouse,
Brushes the roses as he goes:
Yet wavers not one rose.

The wild birds in a cloud fly up
From their sweet feeding in the fruit;
The droning of the bees and flies
Rises gradual as a lute;
Is it for fear the birds are flown,
And shrills the insect-drone?

Thick is the ivy over Alulvan,
And crisp with summer-heat its turf;

Far, far across its empty pastures
  Alulvan's sands are white with surf:
And he himself is grey as the sea,
    Watching beneath an elder-tree.

All night the fretful, shrill Banshee
  Lurks in the ivy's dark festoons,
Calling for ever, o'er garden and river,
  Through magpie changing of the moons:
"Alulvan, O, alas! Alulvan,
  The doom of lone Alulvan!"

THE PEDLAR

THERE came a pedlar to an evening house;
Sweet Lettice, from her lattice looking down,
Wondered what man he was, so curious
His black hair dangled on his tattered gown:
Then lifts he up his face, with glittering eyes,—
"What will you buy, sweetheart? — Here's honeycomb,
And mottled pippins, and sweet mulberry pies,
Comfits and peaches, snowy cherry bloom,
To keep in water for to make night sweet:
All that you want, sweetheart,— come, taste and eat!"

Even with his sugared words, returned to her
The clear remembrance of a gentle voice:
"And O! my child, should ever a flatterer
Tap with his wares, and promise of all joys,
And vain sweet pleasures that on earth may be,
Seal up your ears, sing some old happy song,
Confuse his magic who is all mockery:
His sweets are death." Yet, still how she doth long
But just to taste, then shut the lattice tight,
And hide her eyes from the delicious sight!

"What must I pay?" she whispered. "Pay!"
says he,
"Pedlar I am who through this wood to roam,
One lock of her hair is gold enough for me,
For apple, peach, comfit, or honeycomb!"
But from her bough a drowsy squirrel cried,
"Trust him not, Lettice, trust, oh trust him not!"
And many another woodland tongue beside
Rose softly in the silence — "Trust him not!"
Then cried the Pedlar in a bitter voice,
"What, in the thicket, is this idle noise?"

A late, harsh blackbird smote him with her wings,
As through the glade, dark in the dim, she flew;
Yet still the Pedlar his old burden sings, —
"What, pretty sweetheart, shall I show to you?
Here's orange ribands, here's a string of pearls,
Here's silk of buttercup and pansy glove,
A pin of tortoiseshell for windy curls,
A box of silver, scented sweet with clove:
Come now," he says, with dim and lifted face,
"I pass not often such a lonely place."

"Pluck not a hair!" a hidden rabbit cried,
"With but one hair he'll steal thy heart away,
Then only sorrow shall thy lattice hide:
Go in! all honest pedlars come by day."
There was dead silence in the drowsy wood;
"Here's syrup for to lull sweet maids to sleep;

And bells for dreams, and fairy wine and food
All day thy heart in happiness to keep "; —
And now she takes the scissors on her thumb,—
" O, then, no more unto my lattice come! "

Sad is the sound of weeping in the wood!
Now only night is where the Pedlar was;
And bleak as frost upon a quickling bud
His magic steals in darkness, O alas!
Why all the summer doth sweet Lettice pine?
And, ere the wheat is ripe, why lies her gold
Hid 'neath fresh new-plucked sprigs of eglantine?
Why all the morning hath the cuckoo tolled,
Sad, to and fro, in green and secret ways,
With solemn bells the burden of his days?

And, in the market-place, what man is this
Who wears a loop of gold upon his breast,
Stuck heartwise; and whose glassy flatteries
Take all the townsfolk ere they go to rest
Who come to buy and gossip? Doth his eye
Remember a face lovely in a wood?
O people! hasten, hasten, do not buy
His woeful wares; the bird of grief doth brood
There where his heart should be; and far away
There mourns long sorrowfulness this happy day.

THE OGRE

'Tis moonlight on Trebarwith Vale,
And moonlight on an Ogre keen,
Who, prowling hungry through the dale,
A lone cottage hath seen.

Small, with thin smoke ascending up,
Three casements and a door —
The Ogre eager is to tap,
And here seems dainty store.

Sweet as a larder to a mouse,
So to him staring down,
Seemed the small-windowed moonlit house,
With jasmine overgrown.

He snorted, as the billows snort
In darkness of the night;
Betwixt his lean locks tawny-swart,
He glowered on the sight.

Into the garden sweet with peas
  He put his wooden shoe,
And bending back the apple trees
  Crept covetously through;

Then, stooping, with a gloating eye
  Stared through the lattice small,
And spied two children which did lie
  Asleep, against the wall.

Into their dreams no shadow fell
  Of his disastrous thumb
Groping discreet, and gradual,
  Across the quiet room.

But scarce his nail had scraped the cot
  Wherein these children lay,
As if his malice were forgot,
  It suddenly did stay.

For faintly in the ingle-nook
  He heard a cradle-song,
That rose into his thoughts and woke
  Terror them among.

For she who in the kitchen sat
  Darning by the fire,
Guileless of what he would be at,
  Sang sweet as wind or wire: —

"Lullay, thou little tiny child,
By-by, lullay, lullie;
Jesu in glory, meek and mild,
This night remember thee!

"Fiend, witch, and goblin, foul and wild,
He deems them smoke to be;
Lullay, thou little tiny child,
By-by, lullay, lullie!"

The Ogre lifted up his eyes
Into the moon's pale ray,
And gazed upon her leopard-wise,
Cruel and clear as day;

He snarled in gluttony and fear —
"The wind blows dismally —
Jesu in storm my lambs be near,
By-by, lullay, lullie!"

And like a ravenous beast which sees
The hunter's icy eye,
So did this wretch in wrath confess
Sweet Jesu's mastery.

Lightly he drew his greedy thumb
From out that casement pale,
And strode, enormous, swiftly home,
Whinnying down the dale.

DAME HICKORY

"DAME HICKORY, Dame Hickory,
Here's sticks for your fire,
Furze-twigs, and oak-twigs,
And beech-twigs, and briar!"
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found 'twas the voice of the False Faerie.

"Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here's meat for your broth,
Goose-flesh, and hare's flesh,
And pig's trotters both!"
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,
She found 'twas the voice of the False Faerie.

"Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here's a wolf at your door,
His teeth grinning white,
And his tongue wagging sore!"
"Nay!" said Dame Hickory, "ye False Faerie!
But a wolf 'twas indeed, and famished was he.

"Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,
Here's buds for your tomb,

Bramble, and lavender,
And rosemary bloom! "
" Wh-s-st! " said Dame Hickory, " ye False Faerie,
Ye cry like a wolf, ye do, and trouble poor me."

THE PILGRIM

"SHALL we carry now your bundle,
You old grey man?
Over hill and dale and meadow
Lighter than an owlet's shadow
We will whirl it through the air,
Through blue regions shrill and bare,
So you may in comfort fare —
Shall we carry now your bundle,
You old grey man? "

The Pilgrim lifted up his eyes
And saw three fiends, in the skies,
Stooping o'er that lonely place
Evil in form and face.

" Nay," he answered, " leave me, leave me,
Ye three wild fiends!
Far it is my feet must wander,
And my city lieth yonder
I must bear my bundle alone,
Till the day be done."
The fiends stared down with leaden eye,
Fanning the chill air duskily,
'Twixt their hoods they stoop and cry: —

"Shall we smooth the path before you,
You old grey man?
Sprinkle it green with gilded showers,
Strew it o'er with painted flowers,
Lure bright birds to sing and flit
In the honeyed airs of it?
Shall we smooth the path before you,
Grey old man?"

"O, 'tis better silence, silence,
Ye three wild fiends!
Footsore am I, faint and weary,
Dark the way, forlorn and dreary,
Beaten of wind, torn of briar,
Smitten of rain, parched with fire:
O, silence, silence, silence,
Ye three wild fiends!"

It seemed a smoke obscured the air,
Bright lightning quivered in the gloom,
And a faint voice of thunder spake
Far in the lone hill-hollows — "Come!"
Then, half in fury, half in dread,
The fiends drew closer down, and said:

"Nay, thou stubborn fond old man,
Hearken awhile!
Thorn, and dust, and ice and heat,
Tarry now, sit down and eat:
Heat, and ice, and dust and thorn;

Stricken, footsore, parched, forlorn —
Juice of purple grape shall be
Youth and solace unto thee.
Music of tambour, wire and wind,
Ease shall bring to heart and mind;
Wonderful sweet mouths shall sigh
Languishing and lullaby;
Turn then! Curse the dream that lures thee;
Turn thee, ere too late it be,
Lest thy three true friends grow weary
Of comforting thee! "

The Pilgrim crouches terrified
As stooping hood, and glassy face,
Gloating, evil, side by side,
Terror and hate brood o'er the place;
He flings his withered hands on high
With a bitter, breaking cry: —
"Leave me, leave me, leave me, leave me,
Ye three wild fiends!
If I lay me down in slumber,
Then I lay me down in wrath;
If I stir not in dark dreaming,
Then I wither in my path;
If I hear sweet voices singing,
'Tis a demon's lullaby:
And, in 'hideous storm and terror,'
Wake but to die."

And even as he spake, on high
Arrows of sunlight pierced the sky.
Bright streamed the rain. O'er burning snow
From hill to hill a wondrous bow
Of colour and fire trembled in air,
Painting its heavenly beauty there.
Wild flapped each fiend a batlike hood
Against that 'frighting light, and stood
Beating the windless rain, and then
Rose heavy and slow with cowering head,
Circled in company again,
And into darkness fled.

Marvellous sweet it was to hear
The waters gushing loud and clear;
Marvellous happy it was to be
Alone, and yet not solitary;
Oh, out of terror and dark to come
In sight of home!

THE GAGE

"LADY JANE, O Lady Jane!
Your hound hath broken bounds again,
And chased my timorous deer, O;
If him I see,
That hour he'll dee;
My brakes shall be his bier, O."

"Hoots! lord, speak not so proud to me!
My hound, I trow, is fleet and free,
He's welcome to your deer, O;
Shoot, shoot you may,
He'll gang his way,
Your threats we nothing fear, O."

He's fetched him in, he's laid him low,
Drips his lifeblood red and slow,
Darkens his dreary eye, O;
"Here is your beast,
And now at least
My herds in peace shall lie, O."

"'In peace!' my lord, O mark me well!
For what my jolly hound befell
You shall sup twenty-fold, O!
For every tooth
Of his, in sooth,
A stag in pawn, I hold, O.

"Huntsman and horn, huntsman and horn,
Shall scour your heaths and coverts lorn,
Braying 'em shrill and clear, O;
But lone and still
Shall lift each hill,
Each valley wan and sere, O.

"Ride up you may, ride down you may,
Lonely or trooped, by night or day,
My hound shall haunt you ever:
Bird, beast, and game
Shall dread the same,
The wild fish of your river."

Her cheek burns angry as the rose,
Her eye with wrath and pity flows:
He gazes fierce and round, O —
"Dear Lord!" he says,
"What loveliness
To waste upon a hound, O.

"I'd give my stags, my hills and dales,
My stormcocks and my nightingales
To have undone this deed, O;
For deep beneath
My heart is death
Which for her love doth bleed, O."

He wanders up, he wanders down,
On foot, a-horse, by night and noon:

His lands are bleak and drear, O;
Forsook his dales
Of nightingales,
Forsook his moors of deer, O.

Forsook his heart, ah me! of mirth;
There's nothing gladsome left on earth;
All thoughts and dreams seem vain, O,
Save where remote
The moonbeams gloat,
And sleeps the lovely Jane, O.

Until an even when lone he went,
Gnawing his beard in dreariment —
Lo! from a thicket hidden,
Lovely as flower
In April hour,
Steps forth a form unbidden.

"Get ye now down, my lord, to me!
I'm troubled so I'm like to dee,"
She cries, 'twixt joy and grief, O;
"The hound is dead,
When all is said,
But love is past belief, O.

"Nights, nights I've lain your lands to see,
Forlorn and still — and all for me,
All for a foolish curse, O;
Now here am I

Come out to die —
To live unloved is worse, O! "

In faith, this lord, in that lone dale,
Hears now a sweeter nightingale,
And lairs a tenderer deer, O;
His sorrow goes
Like mountain snows
In waters sweet and clear, O!

What ghostly hound is this that fleet
Comes fawning to his mistress' feet,
And courses round his master?
How swiftly love
May grief remove,
How happy make disaster!

Now here he smells, now there he smells,
Winding his voice along the dells,
Till grey flows up the morn, O
Then hies again
To Lady Jane
No longer now forlorn, O.

Ay, as it were a bud, did break
To loveliness for her love's sake,
So she in beauty moving
Rides at his hand
Across his land,
Beloved as well as loving.

AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

As Lucy went a-walking one morning cold and fine,
There sate three crows upon a bough, and three times three is nine:
Then "O!" said Lucy, in the snow, "it's very plain to see
A witch has been a-walking in the fields in front of me."

Then stept she light and heedfully across the frozen snow,
And plucked a bunch of elder-twigs that near a pool did grow:
And, by and by, she comes to seven shadows in one place
Stretched black by seven poplar-trees against the sun's bright face.

She looks to left, she looks to right, and in the midst she sees
A little pool of water clear and frozen 'neath the trees;
Then down beside its margent in the crusty snow she kneels,
And hears a magic belfry a-ringing with sweet bells.

Clear sang the faint far merry peal, then silence on
the air,
And icy-still the frozen pool and poplars standing
there:
Then lo! as Lucy turned her head and looked along
the snow
She sees a witch — a witch she sees, come frisking
to and fro.

Her scarlet, buckled shoes they clicked, her heels
a-twinkling high;
With mistletoe her steeple-hat bobbed as she capered
by;
But never a dint, or mark, or print, in the white-
ness for to see,
Though danced she high, though danced she fast,
though danced she lissomely.

It seemed 'twas diamonds in the air, or little flakes
of frost;
It seemed 'twas golden smoke around, or sunbeams
lightly tossed;
It seemed an elfin music like to reeds and warblers
rose:
"Nay!" Lucy said, "it is the wind that through
the branches flows."

And as she peeps, and as she peeps, 'tis no more
one, but three,

And eye of bat, and downy wing of owl within the tree,
And the bells of that sweet belfry a-pealing as before,
And now it is not three she sees, and now it is not four—

"O! who are ye," sweet Lucy cries, "that in a dreadful ring,
All muffled up in brindled shawls, do caper, frisk, and spring?"
"A witch, and witches, one and nine," they straight to her reply,
And looked upon her narrowly, with green and needle eye.

Then Lucy sees in clouds of gold green cherry trees upgrow,
And bushes of red roses that bloomed above the snow;
She smells, all faint, the almond-boughs blowing so wild and fair,
And doves with milky eyes ascend fluttering in the air.

Clear flowers she sees, like tulip buds, go floating by like birds,
With wavering tips that warbled sweetly strange enchanted words;

And, as with ropes of amethyst, the boughs with lamps were hung,
And clusters of green emeralds like fruit upon them clung.

" O witches nine, ye dreadful nine, O witches seven and three!
Whence come these wondrous things that I this Christmas morning see? "
But straight, as in a clap, when she of Christmas says the word,
Here is the snow, and there the sun, but never bloom nor bird;

Nor warbling flame, nor gloaming-rope of amethyst there shows,
Nor bunches of green emeralds, nor belfry, well, and rose,
Nor cloud of gold, nor cherry-tree, nor witch in brindled shawl,
But like a dream that vanishes, so vanished were they all.

When Lucy sees, and only sees three crows upon a bough,
And earthly twigs, and bushes hidden white in driven snow,
Then " O! " said Lucy, " three times three is nine — I plainly see
Some witch has been a-walking in the fields in front of me."

THE ENGLISHMAN

I MET a sailor in the woods,
A silver ring wore he,
His hair hung black, his eyes shone blue,
And thus he said to me: —

"What country, say, of this round earth,
What shore of what salt sea,
Be this, my son, I wander in,
And looks so strange to me?"

Says I, "O foreign sailorman,
In England now you be,
This is her wood, and there her sky,
And that her roaring sea."

He lifts his voice yet louder,
"What smell be this," says he,
"My nose on the sharp morning air
Snuffs up so greedily?"

Says I, "It is wild roses
Do smell so winsomely,
And winy briar, too," says I,
"That in these thickets be."

"And oh!" says he, "what leetle bird
Is singing in yon high tree,
So every shrill and long-drawn note
Like bubbles breaks in me?"

Says I, "It is the mavis
That perches in the tree,
And sings so shrill, and sings so sweet,
When dawn comes up the sea."

At which he fell a-musing,
And fixed his eye on me,
As one alone 'twixt light and dark
A spirit thinks to see.

"England!" he whispers soft and harsh,
"England!" repeated he,
"And briar, and rose, and mavis,
A-singing in yon high tree.

"Ye speak me true, my leetle son,
So — so, it came to me,
A-drifting landwards on a spar,
And grey dawn on the sea.

"Ay, ay, I could not be mistook;
I knew them leafy trees,
I knew that land so witchery sweet,
And that old noise of seas.

"Though here I've sailed a score of years,
And heard 'em, dream or wake,
Lap small and hollow 'gainst my cheek,
On sand and coral break;

"'Yet now,' my leetle son, says I,
A-drifting on the wave,
'That land I see so safe and green,
Is England, I believe.

"'And that there wood is English wood,
And this here cruel sea,
The selfsame old blue ocean
Years gone remembers me.

"'A-sitting with my bread and butter
Down ahind yon chitterin' mill;
And this same Marinere'— (that's me),
'Is that same leetle Will! —

"'That very same wee leetle Will
Eating his bread and butter there,
A-looking on the broad blue sea
Betwixt his yaller hair!'

"And here be I, my son, thrown up
Like corpses from the sea,
Ships, stars, winds, tempests, pirates past,
Yet leetle Will I be!"

He said no more, that sailorman,
  But in a reverie
Stared like the figure of a ship
  With painted eyes to sea.

THE PHANTOM

"UPSTAIRS in the large closet, child,
This side the blue room door,
Is an old Bible, bound in leather,
Standing upon the floor;

"Go with this taper, bring it me;
Carry it so, upon your arm;
It is the book on many a sea
Hath stilled the waves' alarm."

Late the hour, dark the night,
The house is solitary;
Feeble is a taper's light
To light poor Ann to see.

Her eyes are yet with visions bright
Of sylph and river, flower and fay,
Now through a narrow corridor
She goes her lonely way.

Vast shadows on the heedless walls
Gigantic loom, stoop low:
Each little hasty footfall calls
Hollowly to and fro.

In the cold solitude her heart
  Remembers sorrowfully
White winters when her mother was
  Her loving company.

Now in the dark clear glass she sees
  A taper, mocking hers, —
A phantom face of light blue eyes,
  Reflecting phantom fears.

Around her loom the vacant rooms,
  Wind the upward stairs,
She climbs on into a loneliness
  Only her taper shares.

Out in the dark a cold wind stirs,
  At every window sighs;
A waning moon peers small and chill
  From out the cloudy skies,

Casting faint tracery on the walls;
  So stony still the house
From cellar to attic rings the shrill
  Squeak of the hungry mouse.

Her grandmother is deaf with age;
  A garden of moonless trees
Would answer not though she should cry
  In anguish on her knees.

So that she scarce can breathe — so fast
  Her pent up heart doth beat —
When, faint along the corridor,
  Falleth the sound of feet: —

Sounds lighter than silk slippers make
  Upon a ballroom floor, when sweet
Violin and 'cello wake
  Music for twirling feet.

O! 'neath an old unfriendly roof,
  What shapes may not conceal
Their faces in the open day,
  At night abroad to steal?

Even her taper seems with fear
  To languish small and blue;
Far in the woods the winter wind
  Runs whistling through.

A dreadful cold plucks at each hair,
  Her mouth is stretched to cry,
But sudden, with a gush of joy,
  It narrows to a sigh.

It is a phantom child which comes
  Soft through the corridor,
Singing an old forgotten song,
  This ancient burden bore: —

"Thorn, thorn, I wis,
And roses twain,
A red rose and a white,
Stoop in the blossom, bee, and kiss
A lonely child good-night.

"Swim fish, sing bird,
And sigh again,
I that am lost am lone,
Bee in the blossom never stirred
Locks hid beneath a stone!"—

Her eye was of the azure fire
That hovers in wintry flame;
Her raiment wild and yellow as furze
That spouteth out the same;

And in her hand she bore no flower,
But on her head a wreath
Of faded flowers that did yet
Smell sweetly after death. . . .

Gloomy with night the listening walls
Are now that she is gone,
Albeit this solitary child
No longer seems alone.

Fast though her taper dwindles down,
Heavy and thick the tome,

A beauty beyond fear to dim
  Haunts now her alien home.

Ghosts in the world, malignant, grim,
  Vex many a wood and glen,
And house and pool — the unquiet ghosts
  Of dead and restless men.

But in her grannie's house this spirit —
  A child as lone as she —
Pining for love not found on earth,
  Ann dreams again to see.

Seated upon her tapestry stool,
  Her fairy-book laid by,
She gazes into the fire, knowing
  She has sweet company.

THE MILLER AND HIS SON

A TWANGLING harp for Mary,
A silvery flute for John,
And now we'll play, the livelong day,
"The Miller and his Son." . . .

"The Miller went a-walking
All in the forest high,
He sees three doves a-flitting
Against the dark blue sky:

"Says he, 'My son, now follow
These doves so white and free,
That cry above the forest,
And surely cry to thee.'

"'I go, my dearest Father,
But O! I sadly fear,
These doves so white will lead me far,
But never bring me near.'

"He kisses the Miller,
He cries, 'Awhoop to ye!'
And straightway through the forest
Follows the wood-doves three.

"There came a sound of weeping
To the Miller in his Mill:
Red roses in a thicket
Bloomed over near his wheel;

"Three stars shone wild and brightly
Above the forest dim:
But never his dearest son
Returns again to him.

"The cuckoo shall call 'Cuckoo!'
In vain along the vale —
The linnet, and the blackbird,
The mournful nightingale;

"The Miller hears and sees not,
Thinking of his son;
His toppling wheel is silent;
His grinding done.

"'You doves so white,' he weepeth,
'You roses on the tree,
You stars that shine so brightly,
You shine in vain for me!

"'I bade him follow, follow!'
He said, 'O Father dear,
These doves so white will lead me far
But never bring me near.'" . . .

A twangling harp for Mary,
A silvery flute for John,
And now we'll play, the livelong day,
"The Miller and his Son."

DOWN-ADOWN-DERRY

DOWN-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon,
Gathering daisies
In the meadows of Doone,
Hears a shrill piping,
Elflike and free,
Where the waters go brawling
In rills to the sea;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Sweet Annie Maroon,
Through the green grasses
Peeps softly; and soon
Spies under green willows
A fairy whose song
Like the smallest of bubbles
Floats bobbing along;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
Her cheeks were like wine,
Her eyes in her wee face
Like water-sparks shine,

Her niminy fingers
  Her sleep tresses preen,
The which in the combing
  She peeps out between;
    Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
  Shrill, shrill was her tune: —
"Come to my water-house,
  Annie Maroon:
Come in your dimity,
  Ribbon on head,
To wear siller seaweed
  And coral instead";
    Singing down-adown-derry.

"Down-adown-derry,
  Lean fish of the sea,
Bring lanthorns for feasting
  The gay Faërie;
'Tis sand for the dancing,
  A music all sweet
In the water-green gloaming
  For thistledown feet";
    Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
  Sweet Annie Maroon
Looked large on the fairy
  Curled wan as the moon;

And all the grey ripples
To the Mill racing by,
With harps and with timbrels
Did ringing reply;
Singing down-adown-derry.

"Down-adown-derry,"
Sang the Fairy of Doone,
Piercing the heart
Of sweet Annie Maroon;
And lo! when like roses
The clouds of the sun
Faded at dusk, gone
Was Annie Maroon;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
The daisies are few;
Frost twinkles powdery
In haunts of the dew;
And only the robin
Perched on a thorn,
Can comfort the heart
Of a father forlorn;
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,
There's snow in the air;
Ice where the lily
Bloomed waxen and fair;

He may call o'er the water,
  Cry — cry through the Mill,
But Annie Maroon, alas!
  Answer ne'er will;
    Singing down-adown-derry.

THE SUPPER

A WOLF he pricks with eyes of fire
Across the night's o'ercrusted snows,
Seeking his prey,
He pads his way
Where Jane benighted goes,
Where Jane benighted goes.

He curdles the bleak air with ire,
Ruffling his hoary raiment through,
And lo! he sees
Beneath the trees
Where Jane's light footsteps go,
Where Jane's light footsteps go.

No hound peals thus in wicked joy,
He snaps his muzzle in the snows,
His five-clawed feet
Do scamper fleet
Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows,
Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows.

Now his greed's green doth gaze unseen
On a pure face of wilding rose,
Her amber eyes

In fear's surprise
Watch largely as she goes,
Watch largely as she goes.

Salt wells his hunger in his jaws,
His lust it revels to and fro,
Yet small beneath
A soft voice saith,
"Jane shall in safety go,
Jane shall in safety go."

He lurched as if a fiery lash
Had scourged his hide, and through and through
His furious eyes
O'erscanned the skies,
But nearer dared not go,
But nearer dared not go.

He reared like wild Bucephalus,
His fangs like spears in him uprose,
Even to the town
Jane's flitting gown
He grins on as she goes,
He grins on as she goes.

In fierce lament he howls amain,
He scampers, marvelling in his throes
What brought him there
To sup on air,
While Jane unharmèd goes,
While Jane unharmèd goes.

THE ISLE OF LONE

THREE dwarfs there were which lived in an isle,
And the name of that Isle was Lone,
And the names of the dwarfs were Alliolyle,
Lallerie, Muziomone.

Alliolye was green of een,
Lallerie light of locks,
Muziomone was mild of mien,
As ewes in April flocks.

Their house was small and sweet of the sea,
And pale as the Malmsey wine;
Their bowls were three, and their beds were three,
And their nightcaps white were nine.

Their beds they were made of the holly-wood,
Their combs of the tortoise's shell,
Three basins of silver in corners there stood,
And three little ewers as well.

Green rushes, green rushes lay thick on the floor,
For light beamed a gobbet of wax;
There were three wooden stools for whatever they wore
On their humpity-dumpity backs.

So each would lie on a drowsy pillow
And watch the moon in the sky —
And hear the parrot scream to the billow,
The billow roar reply:

Parrots of sapphire and sulphur and amber,
Scarlet, and flame, and green,
While five-foot apes did scramble and clamber,
In the feathery-tufted treen.

All night long with bubbles a-glisten
The ocean cried under the moon,
Till ape and parrot, too sleepy to listen,
To sleep and slumber were gone.

Then from three small beds the dark hours' while
In a house in the Island of Lone
Rose the snoring of Lallerie, Alliolyle,
The snoring of Muziomone.

But soon as ever came peep of sun
On coral and feathery tree,
Three night-capped dwarfs to the surf would run
And soon were a-bob in the sea.

At six they went fishing, at nine they snared
Young foxes in the dells,
At noon on sweet berries and honey they fared,
And blew in their twisted shells.

Dark was the sea they gambolled in,
And thick with silver fish,
Dark as green glass blown clear and thin
To be a monarch's dish.

They sate to sup in a jasmine bower,
Lit pale with flies of fire,
Their bowls the hue of the iris-flower,
And lemon their attire.

Sweet wine in little cups they sipped,
And golden honeycomb
Into their bowls of cream they dipped,
Whipt light and white as foam.

Now Alliolyle, where the sand-flower blows,
Taught three old apes to sing —
Taught three old apes to dance on their toes
And caper around in a ring.

They yelled them hoarse and they croaked them sweet,
They twirled them about and around,
To the noise of their voices they danced with their feet,
They stamped with their feet on the ground.

But down to the shore skipped Lallerie,
His parrot on his thumb,

And the twain they scritched in mockery,
  While the dancers go and come.

And, alas! in the evening, rosy and still,
  Light-haired Lallerie
Bitterly quarrelled with Alliolyle
  By the yellow-sanded sea.

The rising moon swam sweet and large
  Before their furious eyes,
And they rolled and rolled to the coral marge
  Where the surf for ever cries.

Too late, too late, comes Muziomone:
  Clear in the clear green sea
Alliolyle lies not alone,
  But clasped with Lallerie.

He blows on his shell plaintiff notes;
  Ape, parraquito, bee
Flock where a shoe on the salt wave floats,—
  The shoe of Lallerie.

He fetches nightcaps, one and nine,
  Grey apes he dowers three,
His house as fair as the Malmsey wine
  Seems sad as cypress-tree.

Three bowls he brims with sweet honeycomb
  To feast the bumble bees,

Saying, "O bees, be this your home,
For grief is on the seas!"

He sate him lone in a coral grot,
At the flowing in of the tide;
When ebbed the billow, there was not,
Save coral, aught beside.

So hairy apes in three white beds,
And nightcaps, one and nine,
On moonlit pillows lay three heads
Bemused with dwarfish wine.

A tomb of coral, the dirge of bee,
The grey apes' guttural groan
For Alliolyle, for Lallerie,
For thee, O Muziomone!

SLEEPING BEAUTY

THE scent of bramble fills the air,
Amid her folded sheets she lies,
The gold of evening in her hair,
The blue of morn shut in her eyes.

How many a changing moon hath lit
The unchanging roses of her face!
Her mirror ever broods on it
In silver stillness of the days.

Oft flits the moth on filmy wings
Into his solitary lair;
Shrill evensong the cricket sings
From some still shadow in her hair.

In heat, in snow, in wind, in flood,
She sleeps in lovely loneliness,
Half-folded like an April bud
On winter-haunted trees.

THE HORN

HARK! is that a horn I hear,
In cloudland winding sweet —
And bell-like clash of bridle-rein,
And silver-shod light feet?

Is it the elfin laughter
Of fairies riding faint and high,
Beneath the branches of the moon,
Straying through the starry sky?

Is it in the globèd dew
Such sweet melodies may fall?
Wood and valley — all are still,
Hushed the shepherd's call.

CAPTAIN LEAN

OUT of the East a hurricane
Swept down on Captain Lean —
That mariner and gentleman
Will never again be seen.

He sailed his ship against the foes
Of his own country dear,
But now in the trough of the billows
An aimless course doth steer.

Powder was violets to his nostrils,
Sweet the din of the fighting-line,
Now he is flotsam on the seas,
And his bones are bleached with brine.

The stars move up along the sky,
The moon she shines so bright,
And in that solitude the foam
Sparkles unearthly white.

This is the tomb of Captain Lean,
Would a straiter please his soul?
I trow he sleeps in peace,
Howsoever the billows roll!

THE PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR

HIS brow is seamed with line and scar;
His cheek is red and dark as wine;
The fires as of a Northern star
Beneath his cap of sable shine.

His right hand, bared of leathern glove,
Hangs open like an iron gin,
You stoop to see his pulses move,
To hear the blood sweep out and in.

He looks some king, so solitary
In earnest thought he seems to stand,
As if across a lonely sea
He gazed impatient of the land.

Out of the noisy centuries
The foolish and the fearful fade;
Yet burn unquenched these warrior eyes,
Time hath not dimmed, nor death dismayed.

HAUNTED

FROM out the wood I watched them shine,—
The windows of the haunted house,
Now ruddy as enchanted wine,
Now dark as flittermouse.

There went a thin voice piping airs
Along the grey and crooked walks,—
A garden of thistledown and tares,
Bright leaves, and giant stalks.

The twilight rain shone at its gates,
Where long-leaved grass in shadow grew;
And black in silence to her mates
A voiceless raven flew.

Lichen and moss the lone stones greened,
Green paths led lightly to its door,
Keen from her hair the spider leaned,
And dusk to darkness wore.

Amidst the sedge a whisper ran,
The West shut down a heavy eye,
And like last tapers, few and wan,
The watch-stars kindled in the sky.

THE RAVEN'S TOMB

"BUILD me my tomb," the Raven said,
" Within the dark yew-tree,
So in the Autumn yewberries
Sad lamps may burn for me.
Summon the haunted beetle,
From twilight bud and bloom,
To drone a gloomy dirge for me
At dusk above my tomb.
Beseech ye too the glowworm
To rear her cloudy flame,
Where the small, flickering bats resort,
Whistling in tears my name.
Let the round dew a whisper make,
Welling on twig and thorn;
And only the grey cock at night
Call through his silver horn.
And you, dear sisters, don your black
For ever and a day,
To show how true a raven
In his tomb is laid away."

THE CHRISTENING

THE bells chime clear,
Soon will the sun behind the hills sink down;
Come, little Ann, your baby brother dear
Lies in his christening-gown.

His godparents,
Are all across the fields stepped on before,
And wait beneath the crumbling monuments,
This side the old church door.

Your mammie dear
Leans frail and lovely on your daddie's arm;
Watching her chick, 'twixt happiness and fear,
Lest he should come to harm.

All to be blest
Full soon in the clear heavenly water, he
Sleeps on unwitting of it, his little breast
Heaving so tenderly.

I carried you,
My little Ann, long since on this same quest,
And from the painted windows a pale hue
Lit golden on your breast;

And then you woke,
Chill as the holy water trickled down,
And, weeping, cast the window a strange look,
Half smile, half infant frown.

I scarce could hear
The shrill larks singing in the green meadows,
'Twas summertide, and, budding far and near,
The hedges thick with rose.

And now you're grown
A little girl, and this same helpless mite
Is come like such another bud half-grown,
Out of the wintry night.

Time flies, time flies!
And yet, bless me! 'tis little changed am I;
May Jesu keep from tears those infant eyes,
Be love their lullaby!

THE FUNERAL

THEY dressed us up in black,
  Susan and Tom and me —
And, walking through the fields
  All beautiful to see,
With branches high in the air
  And daisy and buttercup,
We heard the lark in the clouds —
  In black dressed up.

They took us to the graves,
  Susan and Tom and me,
Where the long grasses grow
  And the funeral tree:
We stood and watched; and the wind
  Came softly out of the sky
And blew in Susan's hair,
  As I stood close by.

Back through the fields we came,
  Tom and Susan and me,
And we sat in the nursery together,
  And had our tea.
And, looking out of the window,
  I heard the thrushes sing;
But Tom fell asleep in his chair,
  He was so tired, poor thing.

THE MOTHER BIRD

THROUGH the green twilight of a hedge
I peered, with cheek on the cool leaves pressed,
And spied a bird upon a nest:
Two eyes she had beseeching me
Meekly and brave, and her brown breast
Throbbed hot and quick above her heart;
And then she opened her dagger bill,—
'Twas not a chirp, as sparrows pipe
At break of day; 'twas not a trill,
As falters through the quiet even;
But one sharp solitary note,
One desperate, fierce, and vivid cry
Of valiant tears, and hopeless joy,
One passionate note of victory;
Off, like a fool afraid, I sneaked,
Smiling the smile the fool smiles best,
At the mother bird in the secret hedge
Patient upon her lonely nest.

THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES TO BED

I PRYTHEE, Nurse, come smooth my hair,
And prythee, Nurse, unloose my shoe,
And trimly turn my silken sheet
Upon my quilt of gentle blue.

My pillow sweet of lavender
Smooth with an amiable hand,
And may the dark pass peacefully by
As in the hour-glass droops the sand.

Prepare my cornered manchet sweet,
And in my little crystal cup
Pour out the blithe and flowering mead
That forthwith I may sup.

Withdraw my curtains from the night,
And let the crispèd crescent shine
Upon my eyelids while I sleep,
And soothe me with her beams benign.

Dark looks the forest far-away;
O, listen! through its empty dales
Rings from the solemn echoing boughs
The music of its nightingales.

THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES TO BED

Now quench my silver lamp, prythee,
  And bid the harpers harp that tune
Fairies which haunt the meadowlands
  Sing clearly to the stars of June.

And bid them play, though I in dreams
  No longer heed their pining strains,
For I would not to silence wake
  When slumber o'er my senses wanes.

You Angels bright who me defend,
  Enshadow me with curvèd wing,
And keep me in the darksome night
  Till dawn another day do bring.

THE LAMPLIGHTER

WHEN the light of day declines,
And a swift angel through the sky
Kindles God's tapers clear,
With ashen staff the lamplighter
Passes along the darkling streets
To light our earthly lamps;

Lest, prowling in the darkness,
The thief should haunt with quiet tread,
Or men on evil errands set;
Or wayfarers be benighted;
Or neighbors, bent from house to house,
Should need a guiding torch.

He is like a needlewoman
Who deftly on a sable hem
Stitches in gleaming jewels;
Or, haply, he is like a hero,
Whose bright deeds on the long journey
Are beacons on our way.

And when in the East comes morning,
And the broad splendour of the sun,
Then, with the tune of little birds

THE LAMPLIGHTER

Rings on high, the lamplighter
Passes by each quiet house,
And he puts out the lamps.

I MET AT EVE

I MET at eve the Prince of Sleep,
His was a still and lovely face,
He wandered through a valley steep,
Lovely in a lonely place.

His garb was grey of lavender,
About his brows a poppy-wreath
Burned like dim coals, and everywhere
The air was sweeter for his breath.

His twilight feet no sandals wore,
His eyes shone faint in their own flame,
Fair moths that gloomed his steps before
Seemed letters of his lovely name.

His house is in the mountain ways,
A phantom house of misty walls,
Whose golden flocks at evening graze,
And witch the moon with muffled calls.

Upwelling from his shadowy springs
Sweet waters shake a trembling sound,
There flit the hoot-owl's silent wings,
There hath his web the silkworm wound.

I MET AT EVE

Dark in his pools clear visions lurk,
  And rosy, as with morning buds,
Along his dales of broom and birk
  Dreams haunt his solitary woods.

I met at eve the Prince of Sleep,
  His was a still and lovely face,
He wandered through a valley steep,
  Lovely in a lonely place.

LULLABY

SLEEP, sleep, lovely white soul;
The little mouse cheeps plaintively,
The night-bird in the chestnut-tree —
They sing together, bird and mouse,
In starlight, in darkness, lonely, sweet,
The wild notes and the faint notes meet —
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul;
Amid the lilies floats the moth,
The mole along his galleries goeth
In the dark earth; the summer moon
Looks like a shepherd through the pane
Seeking his feeble lamp again —
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul;
Time comes to keep night-watch with thee,
Nodding with roses; and the sea
Saith "Peace! Peace!" amid his foam.
"O be still!"
The wind cries up the whispering hill —
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

ENVOI

CHILD, do you love the flower
  Ashine with colour and dew
Lighting its transient hour?
    So I love you.

The lambs in the mead are at play,
  'Neath a hurdle the shepherd's asleep;
From height to height of the day
    The sunbeams sweep.

Evening will come. And alone
  The dreamer the dark will beguile;
All the world will be gone
    For a dream's brief while.

Then I shall be old; and away:
  And you, with sad joy in your eyes,
Will brood over children at play
    With as loveful surmise.

PEACOCK PIE

A BOOK OF RHYMES

UP AND DOWN

THE HORSEMAN

I HEARD a horseman
Ride over the hill;
The moon shone clear,
The night was still;
His helm was silver,
And pale was he;
And the horse he rode
Was of ivory.

MRS. EARTH

MRS. EARTH makes silver black,
Mrs. Earth makes iron red,
But Mrs. Earth can not stain gold,
Nor ruby red.
Mrs. Earth the slenderest bone
Whitens in her bosom cold,
But Mrs. Earth can change my dreams
No more than ruby or gold.
Mrs. Earth and Mr. Sun
Can tan my skin, and tire my toes,
But all that I'm thinking of, ever shall think,
Why, neither knows.

ALAS, ALACK!

ANN, Ann!
Come! quick as you can!
There's a fish that *talks*
In the frying-pan.
Out of the fat,
As clear as glass,
He put up his mouth
And moaned "Alas!"
Oh, most mournful,
"Alas, alack!"
Then turned to his sizzling,
And sank him back.

TIRED TIM

POOR tired Tim! It's sad for him.
He lags the long bright morning through,
Ever so tired of nothing to do;
He moons and mopes the livelong day,
Nothing to think about, nothing to say;
Up to bed with his candle to creep,
Too tired to yawn, too tired to sleep:
Poor tired Tim! It's sad for him

MIMA

JEMIMA is my name,
But oh, I have another:
My father always calls me Meg,
And so do Bob and mother;
Only my sister, jealous of
The strands of my bright hair,
"Jemima — Mima — Mima!"
Calls, mocking, up the stair.

THE HUNTSMEN

THREE jolly gentlemen,
In coats of red,
Rode their horses
Up to bed.

Three jolly gentlemen
Snored till morn,
Their horses champing
The golden corn.

Three jolly gentlemen,
At break of day,
Came clitter-clatter down the stairs
And galloped away.

THE BANDOG

HAS anybody seen my Mopser? —
A comely dog is he,
With hair of the colour of a Charles the Fifth
And teeth like ships at sea,
His tail it curls straight upwards,
His ears stand two abreast,
And he answers to the simple name of Mopser,
When civilly addressed.

I CAN'T ABEAR

I CAN'T abear a butcher,
I can't abide his meat,
The ugliest shop of all is his,
The ugliest in the street;
Bakers' are warm, cobblers' dark,
Chemists' burn watery lights;
But oh, the sawdust butcher's shop,
That ugliest of sights!

THE DUNCE

WHY does he still keep ticking?
Why does his round white face
Stare at me over the books and ink,
And mock at my disgrace?
Why does that thrush call, "Dunce, dunce, dunce!"?
Why does that bluebottle buzz?
Why does the sun so silent shine? —
And what do I care if it does?

CHICKEN

CLAPPING her platter stood plump Bess,
And all across the green
Came scampering in, on wing and claw,
Chicken fat and lean: —
Dorking, Spaniard, Cochin China,
Bantams sleek and small,
Like feathers blown in a great wind,
They came at Bessie's call.

SOME ONE

SOME one came knocking
At my wee, small door;
Some one came knocking,
I'm sure — sure — sure;
I listened, I opened,
I looked to left and right,
But nought there was a-stirring
In the still dark night;
Only the busy beetle
Tap-tapping in the wall,
Only from the forest
The screech-owl's call,
Only the cricket whistling
While the dewdrops fall,
So I know not who came knocking,
At all, at all, at all.

BREAD AND CHERRIES

"CHERRIES, ripe cherries! "
The old woman cried,
In her snowy white apron,
And basket beside;
And the little boys came,
Eyes shining, cheeks red,
To buy bags of cherries
To eat with their bread.

OLD SHELLOVER

"COME!" said Old Shellover.
"What?" says Creep.
"The horny old Gardener's fast asleep;
The fat cock Thrush
To his nest has gone,
And the dew shines bright
In the rising Moon;
Old Sallie Worm from her hole doth peep;
Come!" said Old Shellover.
"Ay!" said Creep.

HAPLESS

HAPLESS, hapless, I must be
All the hours of life I see,
Since my foolish nurse did once
Bed me on her leggen bones;
Since my mother did not weel
To snip my nails with blades of steel.
Had they laid me on a pillow
In a cot of water willow,
Had they bitten finger and thumb,
Not to such ill hap I had come.

THE LITTLE BIRD

MY dear Daddie bought a mansion
For to bring my Mammie to,
In a hat with a long feather,
And a trailing gown of blue;
And a company of fiddlers
And a rout of maids and men
Danced the clock round to the morning,
In a gay house-warming then.
And when all the guests were gone, and
All was still as still can be,
In from the dark ivy hopped a
Wee small bird: and that was Me.

CAKE AND SACK

OLD King Caraway
  Supped on cake,
And a cup of sack
  His thirst to slake;
Bird in arras
  And hound in hall
Watched very softly
  Or not at all;
Fire in the middle,
  Stone all round
Changed not, heeded not,
  Made no sound;
All by himself
  At the Table High
He'd nibble and sip
  While his dreams slipped by;
And when he had finished,
  He'd nod and say,
"Cake and sack
  For King Caraway!"

THE SHIP OF RIO

THERE was a ship of Rio
  Sailed out into the blue,
And nine and ninety monkeys
  Were all her jovial crew.
From bos'un to the cabin boy,
  From quarter to caboose,
There weren't a stitch of calico
  To breech 'em — tight or loose;
From spar to deck, from deck to keel,
  From barnacle to shroud,
There weren't one pair of reach-me-downs
  To all that jabbering crowd.
But wasn't it a gladsome sight,
  When roared the deep-sea gales,
To see them reef her fore and aft,
  A-swinging by their tails!
Oh, wasn't it a gladsome sight,
  When glassy calm did come,
To see them squatting tailor-wise
  Around a keg of rum!
Oh, wasn't it a gladsome sight,
  When in she sailed to land,
To see them all a-scampering skip
  For nuts across the sand!

JIM JAY

Do diddle di do,
Poor Jim Jay
Got stuck fast
In Yesterday.
Squinting he was,
On cross-legs bent,
Never heeding
The wind was spent.
Round veered the weathercock,
The sun drew in —
And stuck was Jim
Like a rusty pin. . . .
We pulled and we pulled
From seven till twelve,
Jim, too frightened
To help himself.
But all in vain.
The clock struck one,
And there was Jim
A little bit gone.
At half-past five
You scarce could see
A glimpse of his flapping
Handkerchee.

And when came noon,
  And we climbed sky-high,
Jim was a speck
  Slip-slipping by.
Come tomorrow,
  The neighbours say,
He'll be past crying for;
  Poor Jim Jay.

MISS T.

IT'S a very odd thing —
  As odd as can be —
That whatever Miss T. eats
  Turns into Miss T.;
Porridge and apples,
  Mince, muffins and mutton,
Jam, junket, jumbles —
  Not a rap, not a button
It matters; the moment
  They're out of her plate,
Though shared by Miss Butcher
  And sour Mr. Bate;
Tiny and cheerful,
  And neat as can be,
Whatever Miss T. eats
  Turns into Miss T.

THE CUPBOARD

I KNOW a little cupboard,
With a teeny tiny key,
And there's a jar of Lollypops
For me, me, me.

It has a little shelf, my dear,
As dark as dark can be,
And there's a dish of Banbury Cakes
For me, me, me.

I have a small fat grandmamma,
With a very slippery knee,
And she's Keeper of the Cupboard,
With a key, key, key.

And when I'm very good, my dear,
As good as good can be,
There's Banbury Cakes, and Lollypops
For me, me, me.

THE BARBER'S

GOLD locks, and black locks,
Red locks and brown,
Topknot to love-curl
The hair wisps down;
Straight above the clear eyes,
Rounded round the ears,
Snip-snap and snick-a-snick,
Clash the Barber's shears;
Us, in the looking-glass,
Footsteps in the street,
Over, under, to and fro,
The lean blades meet;
Bay Rum or Bear's Grease,
A silver groat to pay —
Then out a-shin-shan-shining
In the bright, blue day.

HIDE AND SEEK

HIDE and seek, says the Wind,
In the shade of the woods;
Hide and seek, says the Moon,
To the hazel buds;
Hide and seek, says the Cloud,
Star on to star;
Hide and seek, says the Wave
At the harbour bar;
Hide and seek, say I
To myself, and step
Out of the dream of Wake
Into the dream of Sleep.

BOYS AND GIRLS

THEN

TWENTY, forty, sixty, eighty,
A hundred years ago,
All through the night with lantern bright
The Watch trudged to and fro.
And little boys tucked snug abed
Would wake from dreams to hear —
"Two o' the morning by the clock,
And the stars a-shining clear!"
Or, when across the chimney-tops
Screamed shrill a North-east gale,
A faint and shaken voice would shout,
"Three! and a storm of hail!"

THE WINDOW

BEHIND the blinds I sit and watch
The people passing — passing by;
And not a single one can see
My tiny watching eye.

They cannot see my little room,
All yellowed with the shaded sun;
They do not even know I am here;
Nor will guess when I am gone.

POOR HENRY

'THICK in its glass
The physic stands,
Poor Henry lifts
Distracted hands;
His round cheek wans
In the candlelight,
To smell that smell!
To see that sight!

Finger and thumb
Clinch his small nose,
A gurgle, a gasp,
And down it goes;
Scowls Henry now;
But mark that cheek,
Sleek with the bloom
Of health next week!

FULL MOON

ONE night as Dick lay half asleep,
Into his drowsy eyes
A great still light began to creep
From out the silent skies.

It was the lovely moon's, for when
He raised his dreamy head,
Her surge of silver filled the pane
And streamed across his bed.

So, for awhile, each gazed at each —
Dick and the solemn moon —
Till, climbing slowly on her way,
She vanished, and was gone.

THE BOOKWORM

"I'M tired — Oh, tired of books," said Jack,
" I long for meadows green,
And woods where shadowy violets
Nod their cool leaves between;
I long to see the ploughman stride
His darkening acres o'er,
To hear the hoarse sea-waters drive
Their billows 'gainst the shore;
I long to watch the sea-mew wheel
Back to her rock-perched mate;
Or, where the breathing cows are housed,
Lean dreaming o'er the gate.
Something has gone, and ink and print
Will never bring it back;
I long for the green fields again,
I'm tired of books," said Jack.

THE QUARTETTE

TOM sang for joy and Ned sang for joy and old
Sam sang for joy;
All we four boys piped up loud, just like one boy;
And the ladies that sate with the Squire — their
cheeks were all wet,
For the noise of the voice of us boys, when we sang
our Quartette.

Tom he piped low and Ned he piped low and Sam
he piped low;
Into a sorrowful fall did our music flow;
And the ladies that sate with the Squire vowed
they'd never forget
How the eyes of them cried for delight, when we
sang our Quartette.

MISTLETOE

SITTING under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
One last candle burning low,
All the sleepy dancers gone,
Just one candle burning on,
Shadows lurking everywhere:
Some one came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go
Nodding under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen — and kissed me there.

THE LOST SHOE

POOR little Lucy
By some mischance,
Lost her shoe
As she did dance:
'Twas not on the stairs,
Not in the hall;
Not where they sat
At supper at all.
She looked in the garden,
But there it was not;
Henhouse, or kennel,
Or high dovecote.
Dairy and meadow,
And wild woods through
Showed not a trace
Of Lucy's shoe.
Bird nor bunny
Nor glimmering moon
Breathed a whisper
Of where 'twas gone.
It was cried and cried,
Oyez and Oyez!
In French, Dutch, Latin,
And Portuguese.

Ships the dark seas
  Went plunging through,
But none brought news
  Of Lucy's shoe;
And still she patters
  In silk and leather,
O'er snow, sand, shingle,
  In every weather;
Spain, and Africa,
  Hindustan,
Java, China,
  And lamped Japan;
Plain and desert,
  She hops — hops through,
Pernambuco
  To gold Peru;
Mountain and forest,
  And river too,
All the world over
  For her lost shoe.

THE TRUANTS

ERE my heart beats too coldly and faintly
To remember sad things, yet be gay,
I would sing a brief song of the world's little children
Magic hath stolen away.

The primroses scattered by April,
The stars of the wide Milky Way,
Cannot outnumber the hosts of the children
Magic hath stolen away.

The buttercup green of the meadows,
The snow of the blossoming may,
Lovelier are not than the legions of children
Magic hath stolen away.

The waves tossing surf in the moonbeam,
The albatross lone on the spray,
Alone know the tears wept in vain for the children
Magic hath stolen away.

In vain: for at hush of the evening
When the stars twinkle into the grey,
Seems to echo the far-away calling of children
Magic hath stolen away.

FOUR QUEER TALES

BERRIES

THERE was an old woman
Went blackberry picking
Along the hedges
From Weep to Wicking.
Half a pottle —
No more she had got,
When out steps a Fairy
From her green grot;
And says, "Well, Jill,
Would 'ee pick 'ee mo?"
And Jill, she curtseys,
And looks just so.
"Be off," says the Fairy,
"As quick as you can,
Over the meadows
To the little green lane,
That dips to the hayfields
Of Farmer Grimes:
I've berried those hedges
A score of times;
Bushel on bushel
I'll promise 'ee, Jill,
This side of supper
If 'ee pick with a will."

She glints very bright,
  And speaks her fair;
Then lo, and behold!
  She has faded in air.

Be sure old Goodie
  She trots betimes
Over the meadows
  To Farmer Grimes.
And never was queen
  With jewellery rich
As those same hedges
  From twig to ditch;
Like Dutchmen's coffers,
  Fruit, thorn, and flower —
They shone like William
  And Mary's bower.
And be sure Old Goodie
  Went back to Weep,
So tired with her basket
  She scarce could creep.
When she comes in the dusk
  To her cottage door,
There's Towser wagging
  As never before,
To see his Missus
  So glad to be
Come from her fruit-picking
  Back to he.

As soon as next morning
  Dawn was grey,
The pot on the hob
  Was simmering away;
And all in a stew
  And a hugger-mugger
Towser and Jill
  A-boiling of sugar,
And the dark clear fruit
  That from Faërie came,
For syrup and jelly
  And blackberry jam.

Twelve jolly gallipots
  Jill put by;
And one little teeny one,
  One inch high;
And that she's hidden
  A good thumb deep,
Half way over
  From Wicking to Weep.

OFF THE GROUND

THREE jolly Farmers
Once bet a pound
Each dance the others would
Off the ground.
Out of their coats
They slipped right soon,
And neat and nicesome
Put each his shoon.
One — Two — Three! —
And away they go,
Not too fast,
And not too slow;
Out from the elm-tree's
Noonday shadow,
Into the sun
And across the meadow.
Past the schoolroom,
With knees well bent
Fingers a-flicking,
They dancing went.
Up sides and over,
And round and round,
They crossed click-clacking,
The Parish bound,

By Tupman's meadow
They did their mile,
Tee-to-tum
On a three-barred stile.
Then straight through Whipham,
Downhill to Week,
Footing it lightsome,
But not too quick,
Up fields to Watchet,
And on through Wye,
Till seven fine churches
They'd seen skip by —
Seven fine churches,
And five old mills,
Farms in the valley,
And sheep on the hills;
Old Man's Acre
And Dead Man's Pool
All left behind,
As they danced through Wool.
And Wool gone by,
Like tops that seem
To spin in sleep
They danced in dream:
Withy — Wellover —
Wassop — Wo —
Like an old clock
Their heels did go.
A league and a league
And a league they went,

And not one weary,
  And not one spent.
And lo, and behold!
  Past Willow-cum-Leigh
Stretched with its waters
  The great green sea.
Says Farmer Bates,
  "I puffs and I blows,
What's under the water,
  Why, no man knows!"
Says Farmer Giles,
  "My wind comes weak,
And a good man drownded
  Is far to seek."
But Farmer Turvey,
  On twirling toes
Up's with his gaiters,
  And in he goes:
Down where the mermaids
  Pluck and play
On their twangling harps
  In a sea-green day;
Down where the mermaids,
  Finned and fair,
Sleek with their combs
  Their yellow hair. . . .
Bates and Giles —
  On the shingle sat,
Gazing at Turvey's
  Floating hat.

But never a ripple
  Nor bubble told
Where he was supping
  Off plates of gold.
Never an echo
  Rilled through the sea
Of the feasting and dancing
  And minstrelsy.
They called — called — called:
  Came no reply:
Nought but the ripples'
  Sandy sigh.
Then glum and silent
  They sat instead,
Vacantly brooding
  On home and bed,
Till both together
  Stood up and said: —
"Us knows not, dreams not,
  Where you be,
Turvey, unless
  In the deep blue sea;
But excusing silver —
  And it comes most willing —
Here's us two paying
  Our forty shilling;
For it's sartin sure, Turvey,
  Safe and sound,
You danced us square, Turvey,
  Off the ground!"

THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE

THERE came a Thief one night to Robin's Castle,
He climbed up into a Tree;
And sitting with his head among the branches,
A wondrous Sight did see.

For there was Robin supping at his table,
With Candles of pure Wax,
His Dame and his two beauteous little Children,
With Velvet on their backs.

Platters for each there were shin-shining,
Of Silver many a pound,
And all of beaten Gold, three brimming Goblets,
Standing the table round.

The smell that rose up richly from the Baked Meats
Came thinning amid the boughs,
And much that greedy Thief who snuffed the night air —
His Hunger did arouse.

He watched them eating, drinking, laughing, talking,
Busy with finger and spoon,

While three most cunning Fiddlers, clad in crimson,
  Played them a Supper Tune.

And he waited in the tree-top like a Starling,
  Till the Moon was gotten low;
When all the windows in the walls were darkened
  He softly in did go.

There Robin and his Dame in bed were sleeping,
  And his Children young and fair;
Only Robin's Hounds from their warm kennels
  Yelped as he climbed the stair.

All, all were sleeping, Page and Fiddler,
  Cook, Scullion, free from care;
Only Robin's Stallions from their stables
  Neighed as he climbed the stair.

A wee wan light the Moon did shed him,
  Hanging above the Sea,
And he counted into his bag (of beaten Silver)
  Platters thirty-three.

Of Spoons three score; of jolly golden Goblets
  He stowed in four save one,
And six fine seven-branched Cupid Candlesticks,
  Before his work was done.

Nine bulging bags of Money in a cupboard,
  Two Snuffers, and a Dish

He found, the last all studded with great Garnets
And shapen like a Fish.

Then tiptoe up he stole into a Chamber,
Where on Tasselled Pillows lay
Robin and his Dame in dreaming slumber,
Tired with the summer's day.

That Thief he mimbled round him in the gloaming,
Their Treasures for to spy,
Combs, Brooches, Chains, and Rings, and Pins and Buckles
All higgledy piggle-dy.

A Watch shaped in the shape of a flat Apple
In purest Crystal set,
He lifted from the hook where it was ticking
And crammed in his Pochette.

He heaped the pretty Baubles on the table,
Trinkets, Knick-knackerie,
Pearls, Diamonds, Sapphires, Topazes, and Opals —
All in his bag put he.

And there in night's pale gloom was Robin dreaming
He was hunting the mountain Bear,
While his Dame in peaceful slumber in no wise heeded
A greedy Thief was there.

And that ravenous Thief he climbed up even higher,
Till into a chamber small
He crept where lay poor Robin's beauteous Children,
Lovelier in sleep withal.

Oh, fairer was their hair than gold of Goblet,
Beyond Silver their cheeks did shine,
And their little hands that lay upon the linen
Made that Thief's hard heart to pine.

But though a moment there his hard heart faltered,
Eftsoones he took them twain,
And slipped them into his Bag with all his Plunder,
And soft stole down again.

Spoon, Platter, Goblet, Ducats, Dishes, Trinkets,
And those two Children dear,
A-quaking in the clinking and the clanking,
And half bemused with fear,

He carried down the stairs into the Courtyard,
But there he made no stay,
He just tied up his Garters, took a deep breath,
And ran like the wind away.

Past Forest, River, Mountain, River, Forest —
He coursed the whole night through,

Till morning found him come into a country
Where none his Bad Face knew.

Past Mountain, River, Forest, River, Mountain —
That Thief's lean shanks sped on,
Till Evening found him knocking at a Dark House,
His breath now well-nigh gone.

There came a little maid and asked his business;
A Cobbler dwelt within;
And though she much misliked the Bag he carried,
She led the Bad Man in.

He bargained with the Cobbler for a lodging
And soft laid down his Sack —
In the Dead of Night, with none to spy or listen —
From off his weary back.

And he taught the little Chicks to call him Father,
And he sold his stolen Pelf,
And bought a Palace, Horses, Slaves, and Peacocks
To ease his wicked self.

And though the children never really loved him,
He was rich past all belief;
While Robin and his Dame o'er Delf and Pewter
Spent all their days in Grief.

SAM'S THREE WISHES; OR LIFE'S LITTLE WHIRLIGIG

"I'M thinking and thinking," said old Sam Shore,
" 'Twere somebody *knocking* I heard at the door."

From the clock popped the cuckoo and cuckooed
out eight,
As there in his chair he wondering sate . . .
" There's no one I knows on would come so late,
A-clicking the latch of an empty house
With nobbut inside 'un but me and a mouse. . . .
Maybe a-waking in sleep I be,
And ' twere out of a dream came that tapping to
me."
At length he cautiously rose, and went,
And with thumb upon latch awhile listening bent,
Then slowly drew open the door. And behold!
There stood a Fairy! — all green and gold,
Mantled up warm against dark and cold,
And smiling up into his candle shine,
Lips like wax, and cheeks like wine,
As saucy and winsome a thing to see
As are linden buds on a linden tree.

Stock-still in the doorway stood simple Sam,
A-ducking his head, with "Good-e'en to 'ee,
Ma'am."

Dame Fairy she nods, and cries clear and sweet,
"'Tis a *very* good-e'en, sir, when such folks meet.
I know thee, Sam, though thou wist not of me,
And I'm come in late gloaming to speak with thee;
Though my eyes do dazzle at glint of your rush,
All under this pretty green fuchsia bush."

Sam ducked once more, smiling simple and slow.
Like the warbling of birds her words did flow,
And she laughed, very merry, to see how true
Shone the old man's kindness his courtesy through.
And she nodded her head, and the stars on high
Sparkled down on her smallness from out of the
sky.

"A friend is a friend, Sam, and wonderful pleasant,
And I'm come for old sake's sake to bring thee a
present.
Three wishes, three wishes are thine, Sam Shore,
Just three wishes — and wish no more,
All for because, ruby-ripe to see,
The pixy-pears burn in yon hawthorn tree,
And your old milch cow, wheresoever she goes
Never crops over the fairy-knowes.
Ay, Sam, thou art old and thy house is lone,
But there's Potencies round thee, and here is one!"

Poor Sam, he stared: and the stars o'erhead
A shimmering light on the elm-tops shed.
Like rilling of water her voice rang sweet,
And the night-wind sighed at the sound of it.
He frowned — glanced back at the empty grate,
And shook very slowly his grey old pate:
"Three wishes, my dear! Why, I scarcely knows
Which be my crany and which my toes!
But I thank 'ee, Ma'am, kindly, and this I'd say,
That the night of your passing is Michaelmas Day;
And if it were company come on a sudden,
Why, I'd ax for a fat goose to fry in the oven!"

And lo, and forsooth! as the words he was uttering,
A rich puff of air set his candle a-guttering,
And there rose in the kitchen a sizzling and sputtering,
With a crackling of sparks and of flames a great fluttering,
And — of which here could not be two opinions —
A smoking-hot savour of sage and onions.
Beam, wall and flagstones the kitchen was lit,
Every dark corner and cranny of it
With the blaze from the hearthstone. Copper and brass
Winked back the winking of platter and glass.
And a wonderful squeaking of mice went up
At the smell of a Michaelmas supper to sup —
Unctuous odours that wreathed and swirled
Where'er frisked a whisker or mouse-tail twirled,

While out of the chimney up into the night
That ne'er-to-be-snuffed-too-much smoke took flight.
"That's one," says the Fairy, finger on thumb,
"So now, Mister Sam, there's but two to come!"
She leaned her head sidelong; she lifted her chin,
With a twinkling of eye from the radiance within.
Poor Sam stood astounded; he says, says he,
"I *wish* my old Mother was back with me,
For if there was one thing she couldn't refuse
'Twas a sweet thick slice from the breast of a goose."
But his cheek grew stiff and his eyes stared bright,
For there, on her stick, pushing out of the night,
Tap-tapping along, herself and no other,
Came who but the shape of his dear old Mother!
Straight into the kitchen she hastened and went,
Her breath coming quick as if all but spent.
"Why, Sam," says she, "the bird be turning,
For my nose tells I that the skin's a-burning!"
And down at the oven the ghost of her sat
And basted the goose with the boiling fat.
"Oho," cries the Fairy, sweet and small,
"Another wish gone will leave nothing at all."
And Sam sighs, "Bless 'ee, Ma'am, keep the other,
There's nowt that I want now I have my Mother."
But the Fairy laughs softly, and says, says she,
"There's one wish left, Sam, I promised 'ee three.
Hasten your wits, the hour creeps on,
There's calling afield and I'm soon to be gone.

Soon as haps midnight the cocks will crow
And me to the gathering and feasting must go."

Sam gazed at his Mother — withered and wan,
The rose in her cheek, her bright hair, gone,
And her poor old back bent double with years —
And he scarce could speak for the salt, salt tears.
"Well, well," he says, "I'm unspeakable glad:
But — it bain't quite the same as when I was a lad.
There's joy and there's joy, Ma'am, but to tell 'ee
the truth
There's none can compare with the joy of one's
youth.
And if it was possible, how could I choose
But be back in boy's breeches to eat the goose;
And all the old things — and my Mother the most,
To shine again real as my own gatepost.
What wouldn't I give, too, to see again wag
The dumpity tail of my old dog, Shag!
Your kindness, Ma'am, but all wishing was vain
Unless us can both be young again."
A shrill, faint laughter from nowhere came . . .
Empty the dark in the candle-flame. . . .

And there stood our Sam, about four foot high,
Snub nose, shock hair, and round blue eye.
Breeches and braces and coat of him too,
Shirt on his back, and each clodhopping shoe
Had shrunk to a nicety — button and hem
To fit the small Sammie tucked up into them.

There was his Mother, too; smooth, dear cheek,
Lips as smooth as a blackbird's beak,
Pretty arched eyebrows, the daintiest nose —
While the smoke of the baking deliciously rose.

"Come, Sammie," she cries, "your old Mammikin's joy,
Climb up on your stool, supper's ready, my boy.
Bring in the candle, and shut out the night;
There's goose, baked taties and cabbage to bite.
Why, bless the wee lamb, he's all shiver and shake,
And you'd think from the look of him scarcely awake!
If 'ee glour wi' those eyes, Sam, so dark and round,
The elves will away with 'ee, I'll be bound!"
So Sam and his Mother by wishes three
Were made just as happy as happy can be.
And there — with a bumpity tail to wag —
Sat laughing, with tongue out, their old dog, Shag.
To clatter of patter, bones, giblets and juice,
Between them they ate up the whole of the goose.

But time is a river for ever in flow,
The weeks went by as the weeks must go.
Soon fifty-two to a year did grow.
The long years passed, one after another,
Making older and older our Sam and his Mother;
And, alas and alack, with nine of them gone,
Poor Shag lay asleep again under a stone.
And a sorrowful dread would sometimes creep

Into Sam's dreams, as he lay asleep,
That his Mother was lost, and away he'd fare,
Calling her, calling her, everywhere,
In dark, in rain, by roads unknown,
Under echoing hills, and alone, alone.
What bliss in the morning to wake and see
The sun shining green in the linden tree,
And out of that dream's dark shadowiness
To slip in on his Mother and give her a kiss,
And go whistling off in the dew to hear
The thrushes all mocking him, sweet and clear.

Still, moon after moon from heaven above
Shone on Mother and son, and made light of love.
Her roses faded, her pretty brown hair
Had sorrowful grey in it everywhere.
And at last she died, and was laid to rest,
Her tired hands crossed on her shrunken breast.
And Sam, now lonely, lived on and on
Till most of his workaday life seemed gone.

Yet spring came again with its green and blue,
And presently summer's wild roses too,
Pinks, Sweet William, and sops-in-wine,
Blackberry, lavender, eglantine.
And when these had blossomed and gone their way,
'Twas apples, and daisies and Michaelmas Day —
Yes, spider-webs, dew, and haws in the may,
And seraphs singing in Michaelmas Day.

Sam worked all morning and *couldn't* get rest
For a kind of a feeling of grief in his breast.
And yet, not grief, but something more
Like the thought that what happens has happened before.
He fed the chickens, he fed the sow,
On a three-legged stool sate down to the cow,
With a pail 'twixt his legs in the green in the meadow,
Under the elm trees' lengthening shadow;
And woke at last with a smile and a sigh
To find he had milked his poor Jingo dry.

As dusk set in, even the birds did seem
To be calling and calling from out of a dream.
He chopped up kindling, shut up his shed,
In a bucket of well-water soused his head
To freshen his eyes up a little and make
The drowsy old wits of him wider awake.
As neat as a womanless creature is able
He swept up his hearthstone and laid the table.
And then o'er his platter and mug, if you please,
Sate gloomily gooming at loaf and cheese —
Gooming and gooming as if the mere sight
Of his victuals could satisfy appetite!
And the longer and longer he looked at them
The slimmer slimmed upward his candle flame,

Blue in the air. And when squeaked a mouse
'Twas loud as a trump in the hush of the house.

Then, sudden, a soft little wind puffed by,
'Twixt the thick-thatched roof and the star-sown
sky;
And died. And then
That deep, dead, wonderful silence again.

Then — soft as a rattle a-counting her seeds
In the midst of a tangle of withered-up weeds —
Came a faint, faint knocking, a rustle like silk,
And a breath at the keyhole as soft as milk —
Still as the flit of a moth. And then . . .
That infinitesimal knocking again.

Sam lifted his chin from his fists. He listened.
His wandering eyes in the candle glistened.
Then slowly, slowly, rolled round by degrees —
And there sat a mouse on the top of his cheese.
He stared at this Midget, and it at him,
Over the edge of his mug's round rim,
And — as if it were Christian — he says, " Did 'ee
hear
A faint little tap-tap-tap-tapping, my dear?
You was at supper and me in a maze,
'Tis dark for a caller in these lone days,
There's nowt in the larder. We're both of us old.
And all of my loved ones sleep under the mould,
And yet — and yet — as I've told 'ee before . . . "

But if Sam's story you'd read to the end,
Turn back to page 1, and press onward, dear friend;

Yes, if you would stave the last note of this song,
Turn back to page primus, and warble along!
For all sober records of life (come to write 'em),
Are bound to continue — well —ad infinitum!

PLACES AND PEOPLE

A WIDOW'S WEEDS

A POOR old widow in her weeds
Sowed her garden with wild-flower seeds;
Not too shallow, and not too deep,
And down came April — drip — drip — drip.
Up shone May, like gold, and soon
Green as an arbour grew leafy June.
And now all summer she sits and sews
Where willow herb, comfrey, bugloss blows,
Teasle and tansy, meadowsweet,
Campion, toadflax, and rough hawksbit;
Brown bee orchis, and Peals of Bells;
Clover, burnet, and thyme she smells;
Like Oberon's meadows her garden is
Drowsy from dawn till dusk with bees.
Weeps she never, but sometimes sighs,
And peeps at her garden with bright brown eyes;
And all she has is all she needs —
A poor old Widow in her weeds.

"SOOEEP!"

BLACK as a chimney is his face,
And ivory white his teeth,
And in his brass-bound cart he rides,
The chestnut blooms beneath.

"Sooeep, Sooeep!" he cries, and brightly peers
This way and that, to see
With his two light-blue shining eyes
What custom there may be.

And once inside the house, he'll squat,
And drive his rods on high,
Till twirls his sudden sooty brush
Against the morning sky.

Then 'mid his bulging bags of soot,
With half the world asleep,
His small cart wheels him off again,
Still hoarsely bawling, "Sooeep!"

MRS. MACQUEEN

(OR THE LOLLIE-SHOP)

WITH glass like a bull's eye,
And shutters of green,
Down on the cobbles
Lives Mrs. MacQueen.

At six she rises;
At nine you see
Her candle shine out
In the linden tree:

And at half-past nine
Not a sound is nigh,
But the bright moon creeping
Across the sky;

Or a far dog baying;
Or a twittering bird
In its drowsy nest,
In the darkness stirred;

Or like the roar
Of a distant sea
A long-drawn S-s-sh!
In the linden tree.

THE LITTLE GREEN ORCHARD

SOME one is always sitting there,
In the little green orchard;
Even when the sun is high
In noon's unclouded sky,
And faintly droning goes
The bee from rose to rose,
Some one in shadow is sitting there,
In the little green orchard.

Yes, and when twilight is falling softly
In the little green orchard;
When the grey dew distils
And every flower-cup fills;
When the last blackbird says,
"What — what!" and goes her way — s-sh!
I have heard voices calling softly
In the little green orchard.

Not that I am afraid of being there,
In the little green orchard;
Why, when the moon's been bright,
Shedding her lonesome light,
And moths like ghosties come,

And the horned snail leaves home:
I've sat there, whispering and listening there,
In the little green orchard.

Only it's strange to be feeling there,
In the little green orchard;
Whether you paint or draw,
Dig, hammer, chop, or saw;
When you are most alone,
All but the silence gone . . .
Some one is waiting and watching there,
In the little green orchard.

POOR "MISS 7"

LONE and alone she lies,
Poor Miss 7,
Five steep flights from the earth,
And one from heaven;
Dark hair and dark brown eyes,—
Not to be sad she tries,
Still — still it's lonely lies
Poor Miss 7.

One day-long watch hath she,
Poor Miss 7,
Not in some orchard sweet
In April Devon,—
Just four blank walls to see,
And dark come shadowily,
No moon, no stars, ah me!
Poor Miss 7.

And then to wake again,
Poor Miss 7,
To the cold night, to have
Sour physic given;
Out of some dream of pain,
Then strive long hours in vain

Deep dreamless sleep to gain:
Poor Miss 7.

Yet memory softly sings
Poor Miss 7
Songs full of love and peace
And gladness even;
Clear flowers and tiny wings,
All tender, lovely things,
Hope to her bosom brings —
Happy Miss 7.

SAM

WHEN Sam goes back in memory,
It is to where the sea
Breaks on the shingle, emerald-green,
In white foam, endlessly;
He says — with small brown eye on mine —
"I used to keep awake,
And lean from my window in the moon,
Watching those billows break.
And half a million tiny hands,
And eyes, like sparks of frost,
Would dance and come tumbling into the moon,
On every breaker tossed.
And all across from star to star,
I've seen the watery sea,
With not a single ship in sight,
Just ocean there, and me;
And heard my father snore. And once,
As sure as I'm alive,
Out of those wallowing, moon-flecked waves
I saw a mermaid dive;
Head and shoulders above the wave,
Plain as I now see you,
Combing her hair, now back, now front,
Her two eyes peeping through;

Calling me, 'Sam!'— quietlike —'Sam!' . . .
  But me . . . I never went,
Making believe I kind of thought
  'Twas some one else she meant . . .
Wonderful lovely there she sat,
  Singing the night away,
All in the solitudinous sea
  Of that there lonely bay.

"P'raps," and he'd smooth his hairless mouth,
  "P'raps, if 'twere now, my son,
P'raps, if I heard a voice say, 'Sam!' . . .
  Morning would find me gone."

ANDY BATTLE

ONCE and there was a young sailor, yeo ho!
And he sailed out over the sea
For the isles where pink coral and palm branches blow,
And the fire-flies turn night into day,
Yeo ho!
And the fire-flies turn night into day.

But the *Dolphin* went down in a tempest, yeo ho!
And with three forsook sailors ashore,
The *Portingales* took him where sugar-canes grow,
Their slave for to be evermore,
Yeo ho!
Their slave for to be evermore.

With his musket for mother and brother, yeo ho!
He warred with the Cannibals drear,
In forests where panthers pad soft to and fro,
And the *Pongo* shakes noonday with fear,
Yeo ho!
And the *Pongo* shakes noonday with fear.

Now lean with long travail, all wasted with woe,
With a monkey for messmate and friend,

He sits 'neath the *Cross* in the cankering snow,
And waits for his sorrowful end,
Yeo ho!
And waits for his sorrowful end.

THE OLD SOLDIER

THERE came an Old Soldier to my door,
Asked a crust, and asked no more;
The wars had thinned him very bare,
Fighting and marching everywhere,
With a Fol rol dol rol di do.

With nose stuck out, and cheek sunk in,
A bristling beard upon his chin —
Powder and bullets and wounds and drums
Had come to that Soldier as suchlike comes —
With a Fol rol dol rol di do.

'Twas sweet and fresh with buds of May,
Flowers springing from every spray;
And when he had supped the Old Soldier trolled
The song of youth that never grows old,
Called Fol rol dol rol di do.

Most of him rags, and all of him lean,
And the belt round his belly drawn tightsome in,
He lifted his peaked old grizzled head,
And these were the very same words he said —
A Fol-rol-dol-rol-*di*-do.

THE PICTURE

HERE is a sea-legged sailor,
Come to this tottering Inn,
Just when the bronze on its signboard is fading,
And the black shades of evening begin.

With his head on thick paws sleeps a sheep-dog,
There stoops the Shepherd, and see,
All follow-my-leader the ducks waddle homeward,
Under the sycamore tree.

Very brown is the face of the Sailor,
His bundle is crimson, and green
Are the thick leafy boughs that hang dense o'er the Tavern,
And blue the far meadows between.

But the Crust, Ale, and Cheese of the Sailor,
His Mug and his platter of Delf,
And the crescent to light home the Shepherd and Sheep-dog
The painter has kept to himself.

THE LITTLE OLD CUPID

'TWAS a very small garden;
The paths were of stone,
Scattered with leaves,
With moss overgrown;
And a little old Cupid
Stood under a tree;
With a small broken bow
He stood aiming at me.

The dog-rose in briars
Hung over the weeds,
The air was aflock
With the floating of seeds;
And a little old Cupid
Stood under a tree;
With a small broken bow
He stood aiming at me.

The dovecote was tumbling,
The fountain dry,
A wind in the orchard
Went whispering by;
And a little old Cupid
Stood under a tree;
With a small broken bow
He stood aiming at me.

KING DAVID

KING DAVID was a sorrowful man:
No cause for his sorrow had he;
And he called for the music of a hundred harps,
To ease his melancholy.

They played till they all fell silent:
Played — and play sweet did they;
But the sorrow that haunted the heart of King David
They could not charm away.

He rose; and in his garden
Walked by the moon alone,
A nightingale hidden in a cypress-tree
Jargoned on and on.

King David lifted his sad eyes
Into the dark-boughed tree —
"Tell me, thou little bird that singest,
Who taught my grief to thee?"

But the bird in no wise heeded;
And the king in the cool of the moon
Hearkened to the nightingale's sorrowfulness,
Till all his own was gone.

THE OLD HOUSE

A VERY, very old house I know —
And ever so many people go,
Past the small lodge, forlorn and still,
Under the heavy branches, till
Comes the blank wall, and there's the door.
Go in they do; come out no more.
No voice says aught; no spark of light
Across that threshold cheers the sight;
Only the evening star on high
Less lonely makes a lonely sky,
As, one by one, the people go
Into that very old house I know.

BEASTS

UNSTOOPING

LOW on his fours the Lion
  Treads with the surly Bear;
But Men straight upward from the dust
  Walk with their heads in air;
The free sweet winds of heaven,
  The sunlight from on high
Beat on their clear bright cheeks and brows
  As they go striding by;
The doors of all their houses
  They arch so they may go,
Uplifted o'er the four-foot beasts,
  Unstooping, to and fro.

ALL BUT BLIND

ALL but blind
  In his chambered hole
Gropes for worms
  The four-clawed Mole.

All but blind
  In the evening sky
The hooded Bat
  Twirls softly by.

All but blind
  In the burning day
The Barn-Owl blunders
  On her way.

And blind as are
  These three to me,
So, blind to Some-one
  I must be.

NICHOLAS NYE

THISTLE and darnell and dock grew there,
And a bush, in the corner, of may,
On the orchard wall I used to sprawl
In the blazing heat of the day;
Half asleep and half awake,
While the birds went twittering by,
And nobody there my lone to share
But Nicholas Nye.

Nicholas Nye was lean and grey,
Lame of a leg and old,
More than a score of donkey's years
He had seen since he was foaled;
He munched the thistles, purple and spiked,
Would sometimes stoop and sigh,
And turn to his head, as if he said,
"Poor Nicholas Nye!"

Alone with his shadow he'd drowse in the meadow,
Lazily swinging his tail,
At break of day he used to bray,—
Not much too hearty and hale;
But a wonderful gumption was under his skin,
And a clear calm light in his eye,

And once in a while: he'd smile: —
Would Nicholas Nye.

Seem to be smiling at me, he would,
From his bush in the corner, of may,—
Bony and ownerless, widowed and worn,
Knobble-kneed, lonely and grey;
And over the grass would seem to pass
'Neath the deep dark blue of the sky,
Something much better than words between me
And Nicholas Nye.

But dusk would come in the apple boughs,
The green of the glow-worm shine,
The birds in nest would crouch to rest,
And home I'd trudge to mine;
And there, in the moonlight, dark with dew,
Asking not wherefore nor why,
Would brood like a ghost, and as still as a post,
Old Nicholas Nye.

THE PIGS AND THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

THE old Pig said to the little pigs,
"In the forest is truffles and mast,
Follow me then, all ye little pigs,
Follow me fast!"

The Charcoal-burner sat in the shade
With his chin on his thumb,
And saw the big Pig and the little pigs,
Chuffling come.

He watched 'neath a green and giant bough,
And the pigs in the ground
Made a wonderful grisling and gruzzling
And greedy sound.

And when, full-fed, they were gone, and Night
Walked her starry ways,
He stared with his cheeks in his hands
At his sullen blaze.

FIVE EYES

IN Hans' old Mill his three black cats
Watch the bins for the thieving rats.
Whisker and claw, they crouch in the night,
Their five eyes smouldering green and bright:
Squeaks from the flour sacks, squeaks from where
The cold wind stirs on the empty stair,
Squeaking and scampering, everywhere.
Then down they pounce, now in, now out,
At whisking tail, and sniffing snout;
While lean old Hans he snores away
Till peep of light at break of day;
Then up he climbs to his creaking mill,
Out come his cats all grey with meal —
Jekkel, and Jessup, and one-eyed Jill.

GRIM

BESIDE the blaze of forty fires
Giant Grim doth sit,
Roasting a thick-wooled mountain sheep
Upon an iron spit.
Above him wheels the winter sky,
Beneath him, fathoms deep,
Lies hidden in the valley mists
A village fast asleep —
Save for one restive hungry dog
That, snuffing towards the height,
Smells Grim's broiled supper-meat, and spies
His watch-fire twinkling bright.

SUMMER EVENING

THE sandy cat by the Farmer's chair
Mews at his knee for dainty fare;
Old Rover in his moss-greened house
Mumbles a bone, and barks at a mouse;
In the dewy fields the cattle lie
Chewing the cud 'neath a fading sky;
Dobbin at manger pulls his hay:
Gone is another summer's day.

EARTH FOLK

THE cat she walks on padded claws,
The wolf on the hills lays stealthy paws,
Feathered birds in the rain-sweet sky
At their ease in the air, flit low, flit high.

The oak's blind, tender roots pierce deep,
His green crest towers, dimmed in sleep,
Under the stars whose thrones are set
Where never prince hath journeyed yet.

WITCHES AND FAIRIES

AT THE KEYHOLE

"GRILL me some bones," said the Cobbler,
"Some bones, my pretty Sue;
I'm tired of my lonesome with heels and soles,
Springsides and uppers too;
A mouse in the wainscot is nibbling;
A wind in the keyhole drones;
And a sheet webbed over my candle, Susie,
Grill me some bones!"

"Grill me some bones," said the Cobbler,
"I sat at my tic-tac-to;
And a footstep came to my door and stopped,
And a hand groped to and fro;
And I peered up over my boot and last;
And my feet went cold as stones: —
I saw an eye at the keyhole, Susie! —
Grill me some bones!"

THE OLD STONE HOUSE

NOTHING on the grey roof, nothing on the brown,
Only a little greening where the rain drips down;
Nobody at the window, nobody at the door,
Only a little hollow which a foot once wore;
But still I tread on tiptoe, still tiptoe on I go,
Past nettles, porch, and weedy well, for oh, I know
A friendless face is peering, and a clear still eye
Peeps closely through the casement as my step goes by.

THE RUIN

WHEN the last colours of the day
Have from their burning ebbed away,
About that ruin, cold and lone,
The cricket shrills from stone to stone;
And scattering o'er its darkened green,
Bands of the fairies may be seen,
Chattering like grasshoppers, their feet
Dancing a thistledown dance round it:
While the great gold of the mild moon
Tinges their tiny acorn shoon.

THE RIDE-BY-NIGHTS

UP on their brooms the Witches stream,
Crooked and black in the crescent's gleam;
One foot high, and one foot low,
Bearded, cloaked, and cowled, they go.
'Neath Charlie's Wane they twitter and tweet,
And away they swarm 'neath the Dragon's feet.
With a whoop and a flutter they swing and sway,
And surge pell-mell down the Milky Way.
Betwixt the legs of the glittering Chair
They hover and squeak in the empty air.
Then round they swoop past the glimmering Lion
To where Sirius barks behind huge Orion;
Up, then, and over to wheel amain,
Under the silver, and home again.

PEAK AND PUKE

FROM his cradle in the glamourie
They have stolen my wee brother,
Roused a changeling in his swaddlings
For to fret mine own poor mother.
Pules it in the candle light
Wi' a cheek so lean and white,
Chinkling up its eyne so wee,
Wailing shrill at her an' me.
It we'll neither rock nor tend
Till the Silent Silent send,
Lapping in their waesome arms
Him they stole with spells and charms,
Till they take this changeling creature
Back to its own fairy nature —
Cry! Cry! as long as may be,
Ye shall ne'er be woman's baby!

THE CHANGELING

"AHOY, and ahoy!"
'Twixt mocking and merry —
"Ahoy and ahoy, there,
Young man of the ferry!"
She stood on the steps
In the watery gloom —
That Changeling —"Ahoy, there!"
She called him to come.
He came on the green wave,
He came on the grey,
Where stooped that sweet lady
That still summer's day.
He fell in a dream
Of her beautiful face,
As she sat on the thwart
And smiled in her place.
No echo his oar woke,
Float silent did they,
Past low-grazing cattle
In the sweet of the hay.
And still in a dream
At her beauty sat he,
Drifting stern foremost
Down — down to the sea.

Come you, then: call,
When the twilight apace
Brings shadow to brood
On the loveliest face;
You shall hear o'er the water
Ring faint in the grey —
"Ahoy, and ahoy, there!"
And tremble away;
"Ahoy, and ahoy! . . . "
And tremble away.

THE MOCKING FAIRY

"WON'T you look out of your window, Mrs. Gill? "
Quoth the Fairy, nidding, nodding in the garden;
" *Can't* you look out of your window, Mrs. Gill? "
Quoth the Fairy, laughing softly in the garden;
But the air was still, the cherry boughs were still,
And the ivy-tod 'neath the empty sill,
And never from her window looked out Mrs. Gill
On the Fairy shrilly mocking in the garden.

" What have they done with you, you poor Mrs. Gill? "
Quoth the Fairy, brightly glancing in the garden;
" Where have they hidden you, you poor old Mrs. Gill? "
Quoth the Fairy dancing lightly in the garden;
But night's faint veil now wrapped the hill,
Stark 'neath the stars stood the dead-still Mill,
And out of her cold cottage never answered Mrs. Gill
The Fairy mimbling mambling in the garden.

BEWITCHED

I HAVE heard a lady this night,
Lissom and jimp and slim,
Calling me — calling me over the heather,
'Neath the beech boughs dusk and dim.

I have followed a lady this night,
Followed her far and lone,
Fox and adder and weasel know
The ways that we have gone.

I sit at my supper 'mid honest faces,
And crumble my crust and say
Nought in the long-drawn drawl of the voices
Talking the hours away.

I'll go to my chamber under the gable,
And the moon will lift her light
In at my lattice from over the moorland
Hollow and still and bright.

And I know she will shine on a lady of witchcraft,
Gladness and grief to see,
Who has taken my heart with her nimble fingers,
Calls in my dreams to me:

Who has led me a dance by dell and dingle
My human soul to win,
Made me a changeling to my own, own mother,
A stranger to my kin.

THE HONEY ROBBERS

THERE were two Fairies, Gimmul and Mel,
Loved Earth's Man honey passing well;
Oft at the hives of his tame bees
They would their sugary thirst appease.
When even began to darken to night,
They would hie along in the fading light,
With elf-locked hair and scarlet lips,
And small stone knives to slit the skeps,
So softly not a bee inside
Should hear the woven straw divide.
And then with sly and greedy thumbs
Would rifle the sweet honeycombs.
And drowsily drone to drone would say,
"A cold, cold wind blows in this way";
And the great Queen would turn her head
From face to face, astonishèd,
And, though her maids with comb and brush
Would comb and soothe and whisper, "Hush!"
About the hive would shrilly go
A keening — keening, to and fro;
At which those robbers 'neath the trees
Would taunt and mock the honey-bees,
And through their sticky teeth would buzz
Just as an angry hornet does.

And when this Gimmul and this Mel
Had munched and sucked and swilled their fill,
Or ever Man's first cock could crow
Back to their Faërie Mounds they'd go.
Edging across the twilight air,
Thieves of a guise remotely fair.

LONGLEGS

LONGLEGS — he yelled "Coo-ee!"
And all across the combe
Shrill and shrill it rang — rang through
The clear green gloom.
Fairies there were a-spinning,
And a white tree-maid
Lifted her eyes, and listened
In her rain-sweet glade.
Bunnie to bunnie stamped; old Wat
Chin-deep in bracken sate;
A throstle piped, "I'm by, I'm by!"
Clear to his timid mate.
And there was Longlegs straddling,
And hearkening was he,
To distant Echo thrilling back
A thin "Coo-ee!"

MELMILLO

THREE and thirty birds there stood
In an elder in a wood;
Called Melmillo — flew off three,
Leaving thirty in a tree;
Called Melmillo — nine now gone,
And the boughs held twenty-one;
Called Melmillo — eighteen
Left but three to nod and preen;
Called Melmillo — three — two — one —
Now of birds were feathers none.

Then stole slim Melmillo in
To that wood all dusk and green,
And with lean long palms outspread
Softly a strange dance did tread;
Not a note of music she
Had for echoing company;
All the birds were flown to rest
In the hollow of her breast;
In the wood thorn, elder, willow —
Danced alone — lone danced Melmillo.

EARTH AND AIR

TREES

OF all the trees in England,
Her sweet three corners in,
Only the Ash, the bonnie Ash
Burns fierce while it is green.

Of all the trees in England,
From sea to sea again,
The Willow loveliest stoops her boughs
Beneath the driving rain.

Of all the trees in England,
Past frankincense and myrrh,
There's none for smell, of bloom and smoke,
Like Lime and Juniper.

Of all the trees in England,
Oak, Elder, Elm and Thorn,
The Yew alone burns lamps of peace
For them that lie forlorn.

SILVER

SLOWLY, silently, now the moon
Walks the night in her silver shoon;
This way, and that, she peers, and sees
Silver fruit upon silver trees;
One by one the casements catch
Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
Couched in his kennel, like a log,
With paws of silver sleeps the dog;
From their shadowy coat the white breasts peep
Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep;
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
With silver claws, and silver eye;
And moveless fish in the water gleam,
By silver reeds in a silver stream.

NOBODY KNOWS

OFTEN I've heard the Wind sigh
By the ivied orchard wall,
Over the leaves in the dark night,
Breathe a sighing call,
And faint away in the silence,
While I, in my bed,
Wondered, 'twixt dreaming and waking,
What it said.

Nobody knows what the wind is,
Under the height of the sky,
Where the hosts of the stars keep far away house
And its wave sweeps by —
Just a great wave of the air,
Tossing the leaves in its sea,
And foaming under the eaves of the roof
That covers me.

And so we live under deep water,
All of us, beasts and men,
And our bodies are buried down under the sand,
When we go again;
And leave, like the fishes, our shells,
And float on the Wind and away,
To where, o'er the marvellous tides of the air,
Burns day.

WANDERERS

WIDE are the meadows of night,
And daisies are shining there,
Tossing their lovely dews,
Lustrous and fair;
And through these sweet fields go,
Wanderers amid the stars —
Venus, Mercury, Uranus, Neptune,
Saturn, Jupiter, Mars.

Tired in their silver, they move,
And circling, whisper and say,
Fair are the blossoming meads of delight
Through which we stray.

MANY A MICKLE

A LITTLE sound —
  Only a little, a little —
The breath in a reed,
  A trembling fiddle;
The trumpet's ring,
  The shuddering drum;
So all the glory, bravery, hush
  Of music come.

A little sound —
  Only a stir and a sigh
Of each green leaf
  Its fluttering neighbour by;
Oak on to oak,
  The wide dark forest through —
So o'er the watery wheeling world
  The night winds go.

A little sound,
  Only a little, a little —
The thin high drone
  Of the simmering kettle,
The gathering frost,
  The click of needle and thread;
Mother, the fading wall, the dream,
  The drowsy bed.

WILL EVER?

WILL he ever be weary of wandering,
The flaming sun?
Ever weary of waning in lovelight,
The white still moon?
Will ever a shepherd come
With a crook of simple gold,
And lead all the little stars
Like lambs to the fold?

Will ever the Wanderer sail
From over the sea,
Up the river of water,
To the stones to me?
Will he take us all into his ship,
Dreaming, and waft us far,
To where in the clouds of the West
The Islands are?

SONGS

THE SONG OF THE SECRET

WHERE is beauty?
Gone, gone:
The cold winds have taken it
With their faint moan;
The white stars have shaken it,
Trembling down,
Into the pathless deeps of the sea:
Gone, gone
Is beauty from me.

The clear nakèd flower
Is faded and dead;
The green-leafed willow,
Drooping her head,
Whispers low to the shade
Of her boughs in the stream,
Sighing a beauty,
Secret as dream.

THE SONG OF SOLDIERS

AS I sat musing by the frozen dyke,
There was one man marching with a bright steel pike,
Marching in the dayshine like a ghost came he,
And behind me was the moaning and the murmur of the sea.

As I sat musing, 'twas not one but ten —
Rank on rank of ghostly soldiers marching o'er the fen,
Marching in the misty air they showed in dreams to me,
And behind me was the shouting and the shattering of the sea.

As I sat musing, 'twas a host in dark array,
With their horses and their cannon wheeling onward to the fray,
Moving like a shadow to the fate the brave must dree,
And behind me roared the drums, rang the trumpets of the sea.

THE BEES' SONG

THOUZANDZ of thornz there be
On the Rozez where gozez
The Zebra of Zee:
Sleek, striped, and hairy,
The steed of the Fairy
Princess of Zee.

Heavy with blozzomz be
The Rozez that growzez
In the thickets of Zee,
Where grazez the Zebra,
Marked Abracadeeebra
Of the Princess of Zee.

And he nozez the poziez
Of the Rozez that growzez
So luvez'm and free,
With an eye, dark and wary,
In search of a Fairy,

Whose Rozez he knowzez
Were not honeyed for he,
But to breathe a sweet incense
To solace the Princess
Of far-away Zee.

A SONG OF ENCHANTMENT

A SONG of Enchantment I sang me there,
In a green-green wood, by waters fair,
Just as the words came up to me
I sang it under the wild wood tree.

Widdershins turned I singing it low,
Watching the wild birds come and go;
No cloud in the deep dark blue to be seen
Under the thick-thatched branches green.

Twilight came; silence came;
The planet of Evening's silver flame;
By darkening paths I wandered through
Thickets trembling with drops of dew.

But the music is lost and the words are gone
Of the song I sang as I sat alone,
Ages and ages have fallen on me —
On the wood and the pool and the elder tree.

DREAM-SONG

SUNLIGHT, moonlight,
Twilight, starlight —
Gloaming at the close of day,
And an owl calling,
Cool dews falling
In a wood of oak and may.

Lantern-light, taper-light,
Torchlight, no-light:
Darkness at the shut of day,
And lions roaring,
Their wrath pouring
In wild waste places far away.

Elf-light, bat-light,
Touchwood-light and toad-light,
And the sea a shimmering gloom of grey,
And a small face smiling
In a dream's beguiling
In a world of wonders far away.

THE SONG OF SHADOWS

SWEEP thy faint strings, Musician,
With thy long lean hand;
Downward the starry tapers burn,
Sinks soft the waning sand;
The old hound whimpers couched in sleep,
The embers smoulder low;
Across the walls the shadows
Come, and go.

Sweep softly thy strings, Musician,
The minutes mount to hours;
Frost on the windless casement weaves
A labyrinth of flowers;
Ghosts linger in the darkening air,
Hearken at the open door;
Music hath called them, dreaming,
Home once more.

THE SONG OF THE MAD PRINCE

WHO said, "Peacock Pie"?
The old King to the sparrow:
Who said, "Crops are ripe"?
Rust to the harrow:
Who said, "Where sleeps she now?
Where rests she now her head,
Bathed in eve's loveliness"? —
That's what I said.

Who said, "Ay, mum's the word";
Sexton to willow:
Who said, "Green dusk for dreams,
Moss for a pillow"?
Who said, "All Time's delight
Hath she for narrow bed;
Life's troubled bubble broken"? —
That's what I said.

THE SONG OF FINIS

AT the edge of All the Ages
A Knight sate on his steed,
His armour red and thin with rust,
His soul from sorrow freed;
And he lifted up his visor
From a face of skin and bone,
And his horse turned head and whinnied
As the twain stood there alone.

No bird above that steep of time
Sang of a livelong quest;
No wind breathed,
Rest:
"Lone for an end!" cried Knight to steed,
Loosed an eager rein —
Charged with his challenge into Space:
And quiet did quiet remain.

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